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Against the 'death' of cinema

The long shadow of New German Cinema

Errol Morris and 'the mystery of photography'

The visual discourse of docudrag

'Neo-documentarism' in Matsumo Toshio

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Lives of cinema: against its 'death'

NIELS NIESSEN

When Walter Benjamin claimed that the advent of photography and film was accompanied by a decay of aura, he could not have foreseen that about a century after cinema's birth, the aura that he saw waning would return with a vengeance in discussions surrounding this medium's 'death'. In his 1936 essay 'The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility' Benjamin wholeheartedly embraces the decay of the traditional artwork's cult status as a process of great emancipatory potential, and at no point shows any nostalgia for it. How different this is from many contemporary film theoretical circles – which too often resemble the ceremonial circles of a magic cult – where the supposed decay of filmic aura is generally mourned as a loss and has been said to imply the 'death of film' or, even worse, the 'death of cinema'. In this respect, Christian Metz's observation that 'the cinema fetishist is the person who is enchanted at what the machine is capable of, at the *theatre of shadows* as such' seems truer than ever.¹ Contemporary cinephile-theorists who lament the death of their medium claim to see more in a film than just a movie. They also see a certain relation between the image carrier and the profilmic, a relation that is generally defined in terms of indexicality. It is this indexical relation to reality that the digital image supposedly lacks. But what exactly do these theorists see in the analog that they do not see in the digital? What is an index, and how does one recognize one? And, most crucially, can this alleged relation between film and its profilmic be employed in order to create a distinction between digital moving images and cinema 'proper'?

My answer to this last question will be negative, as I will argue that the relation between the moving image and the profilmic is only one dimension of cinema's ontology. At least as important is the relation between viewer and image, and the way that this mediates the relation

1 Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 74.

between image and profilmic. As I will emphasize in my discussion of C. S. Peirce's semiotics, this is because the index, like every other sign, is a sign *to an interpretant*. The main reason for the persistence within the field of cinema studies of the theoretical quarrel surrounding the death of film/cinema – an idea that is almost impossible to explain to people not familiar with the field – is that many contributors to it have avoided being sufficiently clear about the philosophical implications of defining cinema in terms of indexicality. I will therefore give a detailed investigation of the place the index occupies in the triangular relation between spectator, the cinematic image and the profilmic. In addition, I would like to contribute to the open-ended investigation of the question 'What is cinema now?', a question that will continue to be raised as long as the medium lives.

The expression 'death of cinema' has been used in at least two different ways. An example of the first use can be found in film preservationist Paolo Cherchi Usai's *The Death of Cinema*, where he describes cinema as 'the art of destroying moving images'.² For Usai cinema equals film, and more specifically the social practices surrounding the projection of film. Film, he argues, is continuously exposed to factors or agents that accelerate its inherent process of decay: heat, cold, fire, humidity, sunlight, negligence, forgetfulness, abundance, brute destruction and, above all, that for which film is generally created in the first place: projection. In Usai's reasoning, with every screening a film is brought a bit closer to its extinguishment: watching a film is to watch its process of dying. As a consequence, moving image preservation could be thought of as 'the science of [the moving image's] gradual loss and the art of coping with the consequences, very much like a physician who has accepted the inevitability of death even while he continues to fight for the patient's life'.³

What happens to this death, this medium-specific decay that Usai and many others have presented as inherent to cinema's physical makeup, in the 'digital dark age', as Usai tendentiously calls our times? The digital image too is subject to decay, Usai acknowledges; perhaps even more so than film, in comparison with which it is in many ways easier to produce and to store, but also to destroy.⁴ In current times more images than ever before die unwatched. Yet there is also something missing in the death to which the digital image is subject, namely the process of decay that belongs to the analog image's very 'body' (nitrate, celluloid), a form of death that lies between the decay of a radioactive element and the passing away of an organism. To the extent that this death, particular to the analog image, can function as the dividing line between film and the digital moving image, the impact of the digital era on the medium of cinema could be qualified as the death of cinema's death. This is the second connotation of the phrase 'death of cinema'. In other words, the death of film, or of cinema in general, ironically results from the immunity of the digital image, if it is alive at all, to the death that the analog image suffers

2 Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), p. 7.

3 Ibid., p. 105.

4 Ibid., p. 13.

by its very nature. This does not mean that a digital image needs no preservation in order for it to continue to exist – like all information the digital image is subject to entropy – but unlike the image recorded on a film strip, which in order to be preserved needs to be physically changed, the digital image can be infinitely transmitted to new storage locations without the nature of the image itself being altered.

Cinema's death of its death thus refers to the alleged disappearance of a certain kind of cinematic experience. It is a sense of this loss that forms the premiss for D. N. Rodowick's *The Virtual Life of Film*, in which he addresses the question of whether the essence of cinema is compatible with the digital image. Is digital cinema still cinema? Rodowick's answer is 'no', as evidenced from his sketching of the historical twilight zone in which the medium currently finds itself: 'We stand between the question "What was cinema?" and "What will digital cinema become?"'⁵ Rodowick defines cinema narrowly as 'the projection of a photographically recorded filmstrip in a theatrical setting'.⁶ Though Rodowick at one point claims that he does 'not want to sound a nostalgic note',⁷ he later admits to 'find[ing] it difficult to overcome [his] nostalgia for the analogical world'.⁸ In Rodowick's view the transition from analog to digital is accompanied by a sense of loss, but he also implicitly acknowledges that he is perhaps not fully able to put his finger on the exact nature of this loss:

as film disappears into an aesthetic universe constructed from digital intermediates and images combining computer synthesis and capture, and while I continue to feel engaged by many contemporary movies, I still have a deep sense, which is very hard to describe or qualify, of time lost.⁹

For Rodowick, this time that is now lost marks the essence of the cinematic experience. Time is the quintessential element that made cinema what it *was*, and that is lacking in digital moving images. One of the sources that Rodowick relies on in his attempt to define this cinematic essence is Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed*. Following Cavell, Rodowick argues that cinema produces 'a succession of automatic world projections' that puts its spectators in a condition of watching the world while themselves remaining unseen, in that world and to each other.¹⁰ Despite the fact that all media can be characterized by their specific automatisms, the element that distinguishes film and photography from, for example, painting or theatre is that film's and photography's world projections are mechanically produced and reproduced. This absence of the intervention of a living human agent at the moment the world is transcribed onto the image carrier makes photographs and films 'of the world', in the sense that the material that now holds the photographic or filmic image has literally been in touch with the profilmic world of which the filmic image forms a registration. Rodowick writes:

⁵ D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁰ Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (enlarged edn) (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 72. Cited in Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 46.

the material basis of photography as well as film is a process of mechanically recording an image through the automatic registration of reflected light onto a photosensitive chemical surface. The time of exposure effects a transformation of substance in which time, light, and density are directly proportional. The resulting image is analogical, defined as a direct and continuous transformation of substance isomorphic with the originating image regardless of scale.¹¹

This idea of an analogical correspondence between image and world relates to the notion of the image's *indexicality*, insofar as the index connotes the trace. (I will return later to the index's other connotation, that of *deixis*.) In much recent film theory dealing with the analog–digital transition, the index-as-trace is often referred to as the element that separates cinema from digital media. The clearest formulation of this position is Lev Manovich's statement that 'cinema is the art of the index; it is an attempt to make art out of a footprint'.¹² Manovich's statement has been quoted favourably by scholars including Mary Ann Doane and Laura Mulvey. Doane states that 'What is lost in the move to the digital is the imprint of time, the visible degradation of the image';¹³ while Mulvey writes: 'On one side [of cinema], that of pre-cinema, stands the photograph. The image is still, but, like film, it is indexical. On the other side, that of post-cinema, stands the digital, unlike the cinema in its material composition but able to carry the mechanical, celluloid-based moving image into a multi-media future'.¹⁴ This understanding of indexicality as the element that sets cinema apart from other media, digital cinema included, seems to correspond to Rodowick's position. Ultimately, the sense of time lost that he notices in the digital era can be traced back to a loss of indexicality, as in his opinion 'Analogical processes have a privileged relation to indexicality'.¹⁵

However, by speaking of this loss in terms of the 'weakening', 'diminishing', or 'attenuation' of indexicality, Rodowick, more than Manovich, Doane and Mulvey, also seems to leave open the possibility that digitally produced images retain some sort of indexical relation to the world.¹⁶ Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether cinematic essence can be defined in terms of indexicality or not, Rodowick's reserve about an indexical remainder in digital images is remarkable. This is because the difference between the analog and the digital is, as Braxton Soderman points out, generally theorized as a difference of kind, not of degree.¹⁷

In order to obtain a firmer grasp on this difference, it is necessary to first examine the nature of the index. The origin of this concept is often located in the semiotics of Peirce. Yet whereas in debates in cinema studies the index is often reduced to its connotation of trace – that is, a material connection between a sign and its referent that results from a moment, whether in the past or in the present, of immediate physical contact between this sign and its referent – in Peirce's writings the index has a broader meaning. This is directly related to Peirce's definition of a sign as

11 Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 48.

12 Lev Manovich, 'What is digital cinema?', in Peter Lunenfeld (ed.), *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 174.

13 Mary Ann Doane, 'The indexical and the concept of medium specificity', *Differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2007), p. 144.

14 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006), p. 22.

15 Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 120.

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 117, 145, 174.

17 Braxton Soderman, 'The index and the algorithm', *Differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), p. 159.

18 Charles Sanders Peirce, 'On the nature of signs', in *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic*, ed. James Hoopes (Chapel Hill, NC: University of Carolina Press, 1991), p. 141.

19 Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Prolegomena to an apology for pragmatism', in *Peirce on Signs*, p. 251.

20 Charles Sanders Peirce, 'On the algebra of logic: a contribution to the philosophy of notation', in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume I (1867-1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 226.

21 Peirce, 'Prolegomena', p. 252.

22 Mary Ann Doane, 'Indexicality: trace and sign: introduction', *Differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), p. 2.

'an object which stands for another to some mind'.¹⁸ There are three elements here: the sign itself, the object that it stands for, and the mind or interpretant to which it stands, this interpretant also being a sign – a thought-sign. Peirce defines the index as a sign that is 'really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object'.¹⁹ The relation between the indexical sign and its object thus exists fully independently of the third element that is present in every process of signification, the interpretant. In other words, the index–object dyad excludes the interpretant, the spectator.

Peirce distinguishes the index from the icon and the symbol. Unlike the icon, which partakes in the characters of the object without this object necessarily having a real existence, or the symbol, which denotes the object as a result of habit, the index owes its character to the real existence of the object it points out. For Peirce, the index par excellence is the pointing finger: 'The index asserts nothing; it only says "There!" It takes hold of our eyes, as it were, and forcibly directs them to a particular object, and there it stops'.²⁰ It is crucial that the index gives no insight into the nature of its object. The only information the index conveys is that the object it refers to is near or has been near (and thus exists or has existed). Simultaneously, the same sign or 'perceptible' may function both as index and icon, or both as index and symbol.²¹

In the issue of *Differences* referred to earlier, Doane analyzes this relation between the index on the one hand, and the icon and the symbol on the other. She distinguishes between the index-as-trace, examples of which are the footprint, the death mask or the photograph, and the index-as-deixis, examples of which are the pointing finger, the weathervane, or pronouns such as 'this' or 'I'. Whereas the first type of index partakes of the iconic and 'seems to harbor a fullness', the latter partakes of the symbolic and 'implies an emptiness, a hollowness that can only be filled in specific, contingent, always mutating situations'.²² To this I would add that another way to distinguish between trace and deixis is through the difference in temporality between their respective relations to their referent. The trace originates from a moment of direct physical contact with its object, a moment that now lies in the past but that is recorded in and thereby re-presented by the trace. The index-as-trace thus stands in a diachronic relation to its referent. The deictic index, on the other hand, exists synchronically with its referent. It indicates a connection that *is now*, in the present moment. The trace is the 'has-been there' or the 'no longer there', whereas deixis is the 'there' or the 'that'. In some cases, though, it remains difficult to determine whether an indexical sign is a trace or a deictic sign. For example, a weathervane pointing in one direction can either indicate that there is wind or that there has just been wind.

Two questions follow from this. Can one imagine an index that does not simultaneously also have an iconic or a symbolic relation to the object it points at? And would it be possible to perceive such a 'pure' or 'naked' index? In order to answer these questions it is important to remind oneself that first, an index, like every sign, is a sign *to some interpretant*, and

23 Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Questions concerning certain faculties claimed for man', in *The Essential Peirce Volume I*, p. 24.

24 Jacques Lacan describes the gaze of the real as that which cracks through the infinite repetition of the dialectic between the imaginary and the symbolic, and that thereby stirs us in our mental and bodily movement. See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: the Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Norton, 1998), pp. 73, 75.

25 See Peirce, 'Prolegomena', p. 252.

26 Doane, 'Indexicality', p. 1.

27 Charles Sanders Peirce, 'What is a sign?', in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings Volume II*, ed. Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 5–6.

second, that the index–object dyad does *not depend* on an interpretant. From this it follows that for the interpretant it is only possible to perceive an indexical sign that is not also a symbol or an icon if this interpretant is the index's object itself. Interpreted as such, the 'pure index' is in fact an emptied-out symbol. It is a symbol that has as its object the interpretant's inclusion in the chains of signification. Whether such a moment of immediate or intuitive self-recognition would be possible, it would certainly contradict Peirce's observation, in one of his early writings, that 'thought cannot happen in an instant, but requires a time'.²³ So if it exists at all, the 'pure index' can only be conceived of in terms of a sign that interrupts processes of signification and that as such is akin to the Lacanian gaze of the real.²⁴

In the context of this discussion, however, the index is a sign that is only recognized by virtue of the fact that it also has a non-indexical relation to its object. For instance, the weathervane not only indicates that there is or has been wind, it also always resembles the wind by moving in the same direction, as well as symbolizes it by virtue of its shape and location (unlike a leaf in a tree, which does not necessarily symbolize wind, especially when there is no wind). The footprint is not only the trace of some past presence, it also contains some information about this present absence, such as the foot's size, through which, as Peirce observes himself, the imprint in the sand calls up the idea of a human being.²⁵

So whereas an icon is not necessarily also a trace, the index-as-trace is necessarily also an icon, in such a way that its iconicity cannot be detached from its indexicality. There is no indexical remainder, in other words. There is no part of the indexical sign that, to the extent it is a trace, does not *also* resemble its object. This resemblance or likeness, other than that of the non-indexical icon, directly emanates from the object that is its referent, because of the fact that it is or has been in touch with it. As a result, the trace holds an undifferentiated, one-to-one relation to its object. It is analogue to it.

Another example of such an icon that, in Doane's words, forms a 'direct emanation from the real', is the photograph.²⁶ As Peirce famously argues, the photograph's likeness with the real is inseparably connected to its being-of-the-real:

Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection [namely indices].²⁷

The photographic image, including the film image, cannot be reduced to the representation that constitutes its surface. The photographic image is always also an object, the material 'thickness' of which retains the indexical connection with the profilmic, this thickness itself being the

28 Doane, 'The indexical and the concept of medium specificity', p. 134.

connection. Moreover, as Doane points out, to the extent that photography and film have recourse to language, they also 'invoke the symbolic realm'.²⁸

To recapitulate, given the place of the index in Peirce's classification of signs, one can conclude that, insofar as the photographic image is also an icon – that is to say, also forms a re-presentation of the profilmic – the nature of its indexicality is that of the trace. This is the 'that-has-been' of Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, and in general the kind of indexicality that photography and film are often defined by as media. Insofar as the photographic image can also be understood as a symbol – that is, insofar as it is understood, by virtue of habit and the context in which it appears, as referring to something present – the nature of its indexicality is that of deixis. An example is a picture on the cover of a newspaper that refers to something newsworthy, or at least to something that is presented as such.

Returning to the difference between the analog and the digital: why would the digital image not be a trace of the 'has been there'? After all, one could argue that as long as such an image's digital texture has not been altered or otherwise restructured by human intervention since its moment of capture, the picture appearing in print or on the screen strictly speaking stands in a relation of material correspondence to the world of which it is an image. Evidently this connection, which is one established and maintained through data processing, is infinitesimally 'thin' in comparison to the ones that are created in photochemical processes. Unlike a film negative, a data file cannot be seen or touched because its location of storage, whether on a hard drive, a digital camera or a DVD, is not accessible to our senses, due to the small size of the memory parts that hold it and the multiplicity of storage locations. Yet in spite of this virtual intangibility and invisibility of the link between the digital image and the world of which it is an image, this link, strictly speaking, is not immaterial.

What really seems to prevent the digital photographic image from being a trace, therefore, is that it lacks, to recall Peirce's words about the analog photograph, a point-to-point correspondence to its object, if there is a profilmic object at all. Other than an analog camera, which directly inscribes the photons onto an undifferentiated surface of either chemical emulsion or electrons that, after its development (a process of mediation), becomes the image, a digital camera converts the light hitting the lens into digital data, which is then stored as a set of binary digits, as code. In this conversion process the continuity of recorded reality is interrupted. As Soderman explains:

the physical connection between image and referent in the recording of the image is broken by conventional signs: the algorithms used within the analog-to-digital conversion chop up the smooth voltages [registered in the analog recording process] according to an arbitrary system of symbolic differentiation.²⁹

29 Braxton Soderman, 'The index and the algorithm', p. 159. See this also for an extended discussion of analog video.

Soderman uses the metaphor of chopping up, thus describing this process as one of sampling, but perhaps 'approximately imitates' would be a more adequate description. What actually happens during the conversion from analog to digital is that in a preexistent digital grid every rectangular cell is ascribed a specific colour variable (black, white and shades of grey included). This variable is selected from a finite and discrete set of colour variables as the one that most closely approximates the 'average' colour of the corresponding, undifferentiated part of space in the profilmic. The converter thus does not merely cut up and rearrange the profilmic, it also 'weighs' it and attaches a label to it; it colour-codes it. The digital image could therefore be conceived of as a binary reconstruction of the profilmic, a reconstruction that, as the result of increasing amounts of megapixels, approximates the analog more and more closely, and perhaps even surpasses it in terms of image resolution, but that by its discrete nature will never be able fully to reproduce its continuity. A digital image may be photorealistic, and it may even exceed a photograph in terms of reality effect, but its relation to the real is fundamentally different. As Rodowick writes:

The pixel is a mathematical unit appropriate to the mapping of Cartesian coordinates, but photographic resolution is an approximation of the resolving capacity of lenses, or their ability to produce analogical isomorphism at different scales. The chemical contents of a 35mm frame (the grain of the image) are not equivalent to 12 million pixels.³⁰

³⁰ Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 119.

This grain of the image that ensures the uniqueness of every photograph or film print gets lost in the digital image. On this point I agree with Rodowick. Other than the analog image which, due to the fact that it only exists in relation to a piece of celluloid, photosensitive paper or other material, is also an object, the digital image is an image only. It is a pure surface leading a virtual existence. Despite the fact that the digital image's underlying data, its code, only exist in relation to its minuscule yet concrete storage space, it only becomes an image at the moment these data are interpreted as such by a screening device. This saves the digital image from at least one cause of death: projection. To render visible a digital image, that is to turn its image data into an image on a screen, does not *necessarily* affect these data. Of course the latter can be erased or disorganized in the split second of a mouse click or as the result of a hardware or software failure, but being lifeless by nature they do not *decay* as a film print does.

Besides the analog-to-digital conversion, the other, related rupture of indexicality results from the relative ease with which a digital image can be modified, manipulated or even created without recourse to any captured material at all. During the various stages of PhotoShooting, postproduction, image processing and computer animation, the image surface is literally retouched, or even constructed from scratch. For Manovich this is reason to consider the digital arts as a subgenre of painting, the 'kino-eye' in his view having been replaced by the

'kino-brush'.³¹ And, of course, analog images too can be manipulated, for example in the practice of colouring black-and-white photographs. The manipulation of photographs and films is a process far more laborious than the often automated manipulation of digital images. In addition, unless the celluloid or photopaper is fully retouched or completely covered with a layer of paint, parts of the analog's iconic surface will retain an indexical bond with the profilmic. Therefore, rather than the radical destruction of indexicality that occurs in the analog-to-digital conversion, the alteration of the analog is a process of partial transformation in which the loss of indexicality corresponds to the proportion of the image's surface that has been covered up.

I would now like to shift my attention from the relation between the cinematic image and its profilmic referent in reality to the relation that until now I have only touched upon, but that is in fact intertwined with the former link: the connection between viewer and moving image. After all, cinema is more than just the material nature of a certain image carrier. As Cavell states, in what I take as one of his most important lessons: 'the nature of the audience of an art, its particular mode of participation and perception, is internal to the nature of that art'.³² An ontological examination of cinema thus needs to take into account the relation between moving image and viewer. In light of that relation, the 'death of cinema' (as the death of its death), that according to some film theorists has accompanied the advent of the digital, must have taken either one of two forms: either this death must refer to a specific 'moment' from which time on photographic images could no longer be 'trusted', after the digital turn every photographic image having become a potential *trompe-l'oeil* or, to put it less tendentially, a reality effect; or this death must be understood as an ongoing, gradual process that is directly tied to the repression of analogical moving images by digital ones. The first notion, that of an instant death, seems to make little sense, as it would imply that the mere existence of digital technologies by definition spoils one's cinematic experience, regardless of whether the production of the film one is watching involved these technologies and regardless of the format in which this film is screened. I will therefore limit myself to examining the idea of cinema's death as a gradual process, by addressing the question of to what extent the cinematic experience can be said to depend upon the specific indexical relation between the analog image and this image's profilmic reality.

What do cinema spectators actually relate to when they watch a film, and what do they see? Is it the cinematic image as an object that is both icon and index, or the cinematic image as an image that is an icon only before, by mediation of the viewer, it enters into processes of signification? If it is the indexical bond between the analog and the world that constitutes the material basis of the cinematic experience, then how is this index's absent presence perceived? How does one recognize an index,

33 Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 59.

and what does an index feel like? In order to answer these questions it is informative to turn to the limit example of indexicality discussed by Rodowick, namely a photograph of a white wall. Rodowick writes:

The referent may not be recognizable, but as a result of our experiences of the camera's peculiar causal automatisms, its existence will always be assumed. Many abstract films and photographs even rely on this prior knowledge for their effects.³³

Assuming that the white surface that is this photograph really is unrecognizable as the representation of a wall, how does one know that it is a representation in the first place? How does one know that it is not an overexposed photograph of nothing but light reflected by some no-longer-identifiable object? How does one know that it is a photograph? As Rodowick rightly observes, in cases like this the object is only recognized as an indexical image through prior knowledge of its indexicality and of the mechanical process that has generated this correspondence between image and the world. But is this not always the case? How can one be completely sure, certainly from a distance, that the photograph on the gallery wall really is a photograph and not a photorealist painting, such as one of Gerhard Richter's moving still-lives (figure 1)? How does one know that the black image projected on the screen is the representation of a profilmic night, as in the beginning of Carlos Reygadas's *Stellet Licht/Silent Light* (2007)? (The answer: the crickets on the soundtrack.) How, with full certainty, can one tell apart 'the grain' of a movie shot and projected in film from that of a movie that was shot in digital video before it was transferred to 35mm, in which case the film print constitutes a trace of the originally digital image, this digital image, or at least the converter's interpretation of its data, being the profilmic?



Fig. 1. Gerhard Richter, *Zwei Kerzen/Two Candles*. 1982 (CR 512-2). 140 cm × 140 cm. Oil on canvas.
© Gerhard Richter 2011.

The answer in all of these cases comes down to the impossibility of seeing the index-as-trace itself. The indexical connection between the analog image and the profilmic is never perceived, or experienced in a broader sense, immediately, but is always mediated by: 1. the screened or printed representation, that is, the iconic dimension of the image (including its grain, colour, warmth, and so on); 2. the sound, whether synchronized or not; 3. the context in which this image appears, including the place and situation in which it is encountered (type of theatre, method of screening, and so on); 4. the spectator's prior knowledge or expectations about the way this particular image has come into being (director, genre, year of production, and so on); 5. the spectator's prior knowledge of photochemical processes.

In order to be perceptible or at least felt, the indexical connection thus needs to be pointed out by trustworthy markers of indexicality, by elements in or accompanying the image that operate as deictic indices in relation to the origin of the represented image, and that say 'here it is, the trace'. Therefore, and without denying that an analog image and a digital image are not made out of the same 'stuff', unless one is willing to fully reduce the essence of cinema to the experience of being in the presence of something that cannot be perceived, namely the trace itself, the declaration of cinema's death, understood as the ongoing suppression of analog images, arrives prematurely.

So what constitutes the essence of the cinematic experience if one accepts that this essence cannot be fully reduced to the experience of the trace's absent presence? In order to approach this question, I would like to follow Rodowick's example and go back to Cavell's *The World Viewed*. Even though, as will become clear, at some crucial points I deviate from Cavell's argument about cinema's 'promise of candor',³⁴ I ultimately suggest that his understanding of cinema as a particular relationship between viewer and the world can be carried over into the digital age.

As we have seen, Cavell defines film, and by extension cinema, as a condition of world viewing. According to Cavell, film presents a world by absenting its viewers from this world. Unlike painting or theatre, film offers successive projections of reality itself. 'A painting *is* a world; a photograph *is of* the world.'³⁵ Unlike the canvas, Cavell argues, the screen is not a support, but a barrier that screens the viewer from the world that it holds as a projection, 'as light as light'.³⁶ At some points in his book, Cavell's discussion of film's of-the-world-ness seems to take a medium essentialist turn. By arguing that film, through its 'succession of automatic world projections', presents its spectators with 'something that has happened', 'a world past' that is not to be mistaken for '*the* past',³⁷ Cavell seems to move towards a characterization of cinema as a medium of the trace, of the footprint. This reading of his argument seems, however, to be contradicted at other points in his book, or at least remains unconfirmed. For example, when defending his claim that 'cartoons are not movies',³⁸ Cavell does not play the trace card by saying that cartoons are not

³⁴ Cavell, *The World Viewed*, p. 119.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 72, 210.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 168.

produced in a photomechanical process (which one might expect him to do), but instead states:

The difference between [the animated world] and the world we inhabit is not that the world of animation is governed by physical laws or satisfies metaphysical limits which are just different from those which condition us; its laws are often quite similar. The difference is that we are uncertain when or to what extent our laws and limits do and do not apply (which suggests that there are no real *laws* at all).³⁹

I do not follow Cavell in his argument that ‘cartoons’, or animated images in general (a distinction he does not make), cannot be ‘of the world’. In his insistence on the ability to capture contingency as the distinguishing factor between animation and cinematography, Cavell seems to define the moving image’s relation to reality as one of deixis: ‘There it is, the world!’ In this view, the image presents the viewer with *a* world that is subject to the same laws as, and in that respect points at, *the* world. But to the extent that the viewer is really immediately present to the world cinema creates, this world is an icon (‘Here I am’), and as such does not have a necessary referent in reality. The witnessing of a deictic link between the presented world on the one hand and *the* world on the other only occurs insofar as the image is mediated by the viewer’s incorporated prior knowledge of mimesis as well as of the way the latter’s illusion is produced. But of course animated images can also be recognized as pointing at the world. Excellent examples are Ari Folman’s *Vals Im Bashir/Waltz With Bashir* (2008), a largely animated documentary that is explicitly produced in the absence of documentary footage, and a rotoscope-animated feature like Richard Linklater’s *Waking Life* (2001), a film that simultaneously hides and reveals its underlying mimetic dimension. To this one can add that CGI, arguably also a form of animation, is employed by filmmakers both to create the appearance of contingency and explicitly to disturb such an illusion, as in Jia Zhangke’s *Sanxia haoren/Still Life* (2006).

Therefore, to the degree that Cavell seems to characterize cinema’s ‘promise of candor’ in terms of verisimilitude, I disagree with his observation that the cinematic condition of viewing is ‘of the world’ because the medium takes ‘our very distance and powerlessness over the world as the condition of the world’s natural appearance’.⁴⁰ Moreover, is it not exactly the all too easily accepted illusion of immediacy that an auteur like Jean-Luc Godard questions, not in spite of but exactly in line with his famous claim that ‘film is truth at twenty-four frames per second’? The element of Cavell’s formulation of cinema’s promise that I do share, however, is his argument that the medium gives expression to a specific historical condition of world viewing. Cavell objects to the notion that cinema has changed our ways of looking at the world. On the contrary, at its birth cinema entered a world ‘whose ways of looking at itself – its *Weltanschauungen* – had already changed, as if in preparation for the screening and viewing of film’.⁴¹ Film’s displacement of the world – the fact that it presents a world by absenting its viewers from it – confirms and

39 Ibid., pp. 169–70.

40 Ibid., p. 119.

41 Ibid., p. 226.

42 Ibid., p. 226.

43 Ibid., p. 103.

explains our ‘prior estrangement’ from this world. ‘The “sense of reality” provided on film’, Cavell argues, ‘is the sense of *that* reality, one from which we already sense a distance.’⁴² He thus defines film by a specifically modern relationship between subject and world, a relationship that logically and perhaps also temporally precedes the material birth of the medium’s technology. Film, like painting or theatre, is not a medium *a priori*, in and of itself. Instead, like other media, film had to be created, within art.⁴³

Cavell’s principal thesis can be summarized as follows: the invention of the technology of film offered the material conditions for the expression of an idea of the world, namely that of watching that world unviewed, an idea that in a certain sense preceded film’s technology but that in its particular instances of expression through this technology became the medium of cinema. It remains difficult to determine precisely whether in Cavell’s understanding this intricate *ménage à trois* between film, viewer and the world that constitutes the soul of cinema – that is, that makes cinema cinema rather than something else – is fully immanent to the works that are produced in its name (a stance I would agree with); or whether, according to his argument, the idea of cinema transcends its body, that is, its technology. What one *can* determine, though, is that in its conceptualization of cinema as a way of world viewing that emerged at a particular historical moment, Cavell’s ontology of the cinematic image seems to leave space for an understanding of the medium’s essence as a category that is dynamic rather than static.

Therefore, and while acknowledging the risk of overstretching Cavell’s argument to the point that it is no longer his, I would suggest that *The World Viewed* can be taken as an invitation to understand, or at least as a meditation that leaves open the possibility of understanding, cinema as a medium that is inherently transforming, instead of one that can be defined by a fixed set of material properties. For cinema to be of the world also means to be of its time, and not just of the time in which it first saw the light, but also of the times that have followed since and that will follow. I therefore wish to believe that cinema by its very nature possesses the potential to change with the world, not just through its ability to incorporate new technologies – as there are moveable cameras, synchronized sound, colour photography, digital video, CGI, 3-D, and so on – but also and more fundamentally by giving expression to people’s changing relationships to the world, that is, to transformations in world viewing.

This line of understanding cinema as an inherently mutable medium finds support in Tom Gunning’s essay ‘Moving away from the index’. Gunning rejects the notion that cinema is dying or has already died. As opposed to ‘the essentialist approach of classical film theory’, he proposes to conceive of cinema as a medium that is inherently transforming:

Cinema has never been one thing. It has always been a point of intersection, a braiding together of diverse strands. ... Thus anyone

44 Tom Gunning, 'Moving away from the index: cinema and the impression of reality', *Differences: a Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2007), p. 33.

45 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 47.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

47 It should be noted that not only the question of whether cinema has died is contested, but also that of when exactly it was born. Though many people locate this as 1895, when the Lumière brothers screened their first film, Dudley Andrew, for example, positions it later: 'The cinema came into its own around 1910. ... I'm not the one to send out this tardy birth-announcement; Edgar Morin did that in 1956 in *Cinema: or the Imaginary Man* when he headed a chapter "Metamorphosis of the Cinematographe into Cinema".' Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is!* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. xiii–iv.

who sees the demise of the cinema as inevitable must be aware they are speaking only of one form of cinema (or more likely several successive forms whose differences they choose to overlook).⁴⁴

Gunning goes on to give a tentative definition to the medium. Drawing upon Metz's early writings, he claims that the cinematic image testifies to a present or a presence rather than pointing back to the past. Citing Metz, Gunning writes that 'The movie spectator is absorbed, not by a "has been there" but by a sense of "There it is"'.⁴⁵ Cinema creates a world, one could add. Cinema achieves this sense of 'There it is' through its motion, not by presenting its audience with a picture of this 'it', but by presenting the viewer with 'an experience of seeing something truly moving'.⁴⁶

Moving is certainly something that cinema has always done. At the same time, in his attempt to steer clear of the pitfall of medium essentialism Gunning plays a little too much on the safe side, if only because, as he points out himself, his definition of cinema as an 'art of motion' also fits aesthetic practices that are not, or at least not necessarily, cinematic, such as performance art, theatre or dance. So what is cinema, or more precisely what has cinema always been, apart from an art of and in motion? Is it possible to discern at least one 'central' string in the cinematic braid, to elaborate on Gunning's metaphor, to which in the course of the medium's history other strings have attached themselves?⁴⁷ It seems defensible to state that throughout its history cinema has always revolved around the making visible on a two-dimensional framed surface, to an audience and by means of a technological apparatus, previously registered moving images. However, the exact nature of the apparatus, the type of surface, the image carrier used, and also the setting in which the images are made visible – in short the means through and the place in which motion is created – are all variable parameters. The only really stable factor seems to be the time lapse between the moment a cinematic work's production process is completed and the moment that this work is screened and consumed. This temporal interval is the reason why the cinema spectator has always watched and keeps on watching unviewed the worlds that cinema creates. I would argue that, when stretched to its limits, Cavell's characterization of cinema has survived the digital turn, despite the ongoing displacement of cinema from the film theatre into other spaces, especially the home, the web (or the internet at large) and the art gallery (as well as the museum as a multipurpose institute). The reason is that this displacement of cinematic worlds is not happening to cinema but is a part of its essence.

But does this mean, some readers might wonder, that films that are specifically produced for television broadcasting and that have never been screened in a theatrical setting should be considered cinematic too? Does this mean that so-called 'high production value' television series are somehow part of cinema? Does this mean that YouTube clips can potentially be cinematic? Indeed, why not? If television films are not considered cinematic then why are festival films that have never received a

theatrical release? Do television series not create a communal moving image experience that is similar to the experience particular to a film screening? And does not the fact that a cinematic institute such as *Cahiers du cinéma* has deemed the US television series *The Sopranos* and *Mad Men* worthy of discussion make them at least somewhat cinematic?

I realize that such an open-ended answer to the question ‘Where does cinema begin and where does it end?’ is not entirely satisfying. One thing is certain, though: every ontology of the cinema, however narrowly or broadly defined, needs to include the relation between viewer and image. This relation does not exist independently of the braid that is cinema but is indissolubly intertwined with it.

How has this relation changed in our digital age? The digitalization of the cinematic image has made it possible to take home the worlds that cinema creates. To some extent this displacement of the cinematic image, and thereby of cinema itself, from the public space of the film theatre to the private space of the home had already been engendered by the technologies of television and video. By ‘home’ I here refer to places of private viewing at large. This definition extends to all places, including public ones, where viewers can be in control of the playing device, ranging from people’s houses to the park, and more generally to all places where people make themselves at home.

In the digital era this displacement of cinema goes further than ever before. The more the cinematic image becomes detached from its indexical carrier, the more this image becomes an object, and presents itself as an object. This object can be touched and retouched, not only by its producers but also by its consumers, its viewers. Those viewers can buy it or freely retrieve it from the internet, can collect it and delete it, can easily share it with others, can watch it pretty much wherever, whenever and however often they want to, can pause, rewind or skim it, and, perhaps most importantly, more than ever can watch *whatever* they want (a point to which I will return). In a sense the experience of watching a film has come to resemble that of reading a book.⁴⁸ Much like the reader of a novel, the viewer of digital images can go back and rewatch a scene, skip to the end to find out ‘whodunnit’, or pause the movie in order to pick it up at a later moment. The viewer has thus been given the option to interact with the linear course of a film’s narrative without being able to change this narrative itself or become an active agent or authorial voice in it (as is the case in a video game).

This increasing tangibility and manipulability of the moving image creates new kinds of viewers. Laura Mulvey, for example, introduces the possessive spectator and the pensive spectator. Both categories are movie watchers who have detached themselves from the collective (theatre) audience and who instead watch films by themselves, in their private spaces where they can counteract the ephemerality of the cinematic experience. The possessive spectator does so by delaying the movie and

48 Illustrative in this respect is that new devices such as tablet computers are marketed as combining paper-based media and screen-based media.

49 Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p. 161.

50 Ibid., pp. 165–66.

51 Ibid., p. 186.

52 Among various clues, the one that ‘solves’ *Caché* is the furtive shadow of Haneke’s camera that, at about ten minutes into the film, is cast onto the trees by the headlights of Georges’s car. This shadow is the visible evidence that proves the filmmaker (and his crew) guilty of having sent the tapes.

53 See Richard Porton, ‘Collective guilt and individual responsibility: an interview with Michael Haneke’, *Cineaste*, vol. 31, no. 1 (2005), pp. 50–51, p. 51.

54 ‘Monsieur Godard, que pensez-vous, est-ce que les nouvelles petites caméras numériques pourront sauver le cinéma?’

fragmenting it into favourite moments, in order to get a hold on and to possess the previously ‘elusive image’.⁴⁹ In this practice of watching movies in a delayed and fragmented manner, Mulvey sees a potential to weaken the ‘narrative drive’ and to reclaim the look. The possessive spectator is a fetishistic spectator who, Mulvey writes, ‘becomes more fascinated by image than plot, returning compulsively to privileged moments, investing emotion and “visual pleasure” in any slight gesture, a particular look or exchange taking place on the screen’.⁵⁰

The pensive spectator also delays cinema, but he or she does so for the experience of what Roland Barthes has called the *punctum*, that contingent detail in the photographic image or film still that has been overlooked by the photographer or cinematographer but that is visible to the viewer, and that indicates the presence of reality, the ‘this was now’. In digital viewing, something similar to this experience is available. Mulvey writes:

the pensive spectator who pauses the image with new technologies may bring to the cinema the resonance of the still photograph, the association with death usually concealed by the film’s movement, its particularly strong inscription of the index.⁵¹

In addition to these new modes of film watching that find their origin in the control options that are part of electronic or digital playing devices, one can also point at modes of interactive spectatorship that are implicated by particular movies made within the digital era, and that explicitly demand that the viewer deal with them as objects and make use of the increased amount of control that is available to them. The epitome of this implicated spectator is probably that created by Michael Haneke’s *Caché/Hidden* (2005). Shot on HD video, and distributed on 35mm print, this ‘whodunnit’ refuses to be solved in a theatrical setting and needs to be watched at home, on DVD or any other digital format, where the viewer, now alone with the film, can scrutinize its images for the many hidden clues it contains, much in the same fashion as the protagonists Anne and Georges do with the videotapes left on their doorstep.⁵² This short-circuit between the film’s diegesis and the viewer’s reality of watching is emphasized even more by the blood-stain that is printed on *Caché*’s DVD, the same image as the child’s drawing that one of the videotapes in the film is wrapped in. In his attempt to make the viewer realize his credo that ‘film is a lie at twenty-four frames per second in the service of truth’, Haneke forces the viewer to identify with his protagonists by literally placing the viewer in their position: at home, in front of the screen.⁵³

Besides Haneke’s perverse cinematic game, or examples cited earlier such as *Still Life* and *Waltz with Bashir*, there are of course many films that engage with digital technologies in an interesting way: Godard’s ongoing experiments with and reflections on digital video, for example in *Notre musique* (2004), in which, through the character of a female Bosnian student, the director asks his diegetic self whether he thinks small digital cameras can save cinema;⁵⁴ *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001),

whose story becomes clearer only after visiting the film's website; Agnès Varda's *Les glaneurs et la glaneuse/The Gleaners and I* (2000), a meditation on small digital cameras, among other things; or Aleksandr Sokurov's *Russkiy kovcheg/Russian Ark* (2002), a film of a museum consisting of a single shot. Yet these examples remain exceptions in a digital landscape that is dominated by films that hardly set themselves apart, whether narratively, stylistically or in terms of viewer interaction, from films produced in the predigital era. In this respect I fully agree with Rodowick's observation that 'If the digital is such a revolutionary process of image making, why is its technological and aesthetic goal to become perceptually indiscernible from an earlier mode of image production?'⁵⁵ In fact Rodowick's lament resonates with the one that Theodor Adorno, in a 1936 letter to Walter Benjamin, expressed regarding the revolutionary potential his friend attributed to film:

When I spent a day in the studios of Neubabelsberg a couple of years ago, what impressed me most of all was how *little* montage and all the advanced techniques you emphasize were actually used; rather, it seems as though reality is always *constructed* with an infantile attachment to the mimetic and then 'photographed'.⁵⁶

In many respects Adorno's critique still stands. In line with his argument that the technology of film did not necessarily implicate the use of aesthetic techniques made possible by this technology, the digital turn has not inaugurated a revolution in the types of images that are produced in this era. Illustrative in this respect is that 3-D spectacles such as *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) are also offered minus the extra 'D'. For now the promise of three-dimensional candour remains merely an empty shell, this shell being the apparatus itself that is venerated for its hypermimetic power.

What digital technologies have brought about, however, is a multiplication of the possible ways in which viewers can relate to moving images, not only to the ones produced in the digital era but also to those that were made before. This transformation manifests itself primarily in the increased tangibility of the moving image, a tangibility that is the direct result of the growing separation between the moving image and a particular material image carrier. Once more the contemporary masses, to paraphrase Benjamin, are fulfilled in their insatiable desire to 'bring things "closer" spatially and humanly'.⁵⁷ The aura that is shattered this time is the 'unique apparition of a distance' that the cinephile experiences during theatrical film projections. Similar to that of a painting, a film copy's cult value is directly related to its uniqueness as experienced by the viewer. Determining factors here are a copy's actual rarity, its state, the frequency with which it is screened, and the effort and money the spectator has needed to spend in order to attend its screening.

With the cinematic image becoming more and more virtual, this cult value withers. Rodowick gives a poignant illustration of this decay of cinematic aura through an anecdote of what he describes as his 'personal

⁵⁵ Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Letter from 18 March 1936, in Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1928–1940*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 131.

⁵⁷ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 223.

58 Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, p. 26.

59 Whereas in recent years cinema attendance in the USA has gone down but box-office revenue remained fairly stable due to higher ticket prices, in the UK, as in many other European countries, cinema attendance, after a period of decline, has increased again, partly due to the continuing growth of 3-D technology. In the UK, 2009 was the second-highest year in terms of admissions since 1971. See Mark Brown, 'Cinema takings at record high', *Guardian*, 21 July 2010, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/jul/21/cinema-takings-at-record-high>> accessed 7 June 2011.

experience of the end of cinema'. He writes that when one night in 1989 he entered his local video store, he discovered that Pasolini's entire *oeuvre* now was available on videocassette. 'Five years earlier', he continues, 'I might have prioritized my life around a trip to New York to fill in the one or two Pasolini films I hadn't seen, or to review *en bloc* a group of his films. ... That evening, I'm sure I passed on Pasolini and moved on to other things, for opportunity and time were no longer precious commodities. There was time.'⁵⁸

Though it is hard not to share Rodowick's nostalgia, which in my case is nostalgia for a world I have never really experienced, and though I agree with most of his reasoning, I disagree with his conclusion that the partial displacement of the cinematic image marks its death. Cinema, and with it cinephilia, lives on and finds other modes of expression – in private space, which is being displaced itself, as well as in new and more traditional public spaces of exhibition, distribution and screening. More than ever before the cinephile and/or film theorist has the opportunity to watch and collect the films he or she wants, including films that do not make it to the town in which he or she happens to live, or that have never received a theatrical release in the first place. In other words, films have increasingly become not only more tangible but also more visible. The price paid for this remains hard to determine, as thus far the displacement of the cinematic image does not necessarily seem to be accompanied by the disappearance of art house cinemas or declining cinema attendance in general.⁵⁹ More obvious are the new possibilities, not only for seeing films but for sharing, analyzing, critiquing and teaching them.

On a more general level the displacement of cinema can even be said to give expression to ongoing shifts within the dialectic between private and public space itself. In our digital age public spaces are subject to an increasing process of digitalization, in the sense that use of and access to public spaces is more and more controlled on the level of identifiable groups of a population, or even on that of the individual. The beginning of this process predates the invention of digital technologies themselves and may even be inherent to modern capital's tendency to venture into its outsidings, including the outsidings within the spaces it already inhabits. But digital technologies have dramatically accelerated this process. One might consider, for example, the ongoing efforts made by companies such as Google or Facebook to 'personalize' access to the web or to the internet in general, in order to collect marketable data. As a consequence the public dimension of these spaces – their so-called neutrality – is under pressure.

Cinema's particular relation to the internet – understood as a communication network that is used for both private and public purposes, and in the form of the web – seems threefold. First, the internet facilitates distribution of films to private and increasingly to communal viewing spaces. One could think of streaming video services like that of Netflix, torrent trackers and file-sharing communities, but also of digital cinema distribution systems. Second, the web has become one of the main places

⁶⁰ See 'Film Socialisme J.L. Godard Trailer 2', <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vK4yLg3_Ak> accessed 7 June 2011.

⁶¹ See 'Decasia excerpt 1', <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeEzb-0v77A>> accessed 7 June 2011.

⁶² See 'YouTube Play: the Jury Selection', <<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/interact/participate/youtube-play/top-videos>> accessed 7 June 2011.

⁶³ Erika Balsom, 'A cinema in the gallery, a cinema in ruins', *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 4 (2009), p. 423.

of exchange for cinephiles, critics, theorists, and so on, whether via blogs, forums or database sites such as IMDb. Third, while leaving open the question of whether or not under certain circumstances YouTube videos are indeed forms of cinema, some can certainly be taken as reflections on the question 'What is cinema now?' Three examples: first, for Godard's *Film Socialisme* (2010), his first feature entirely shot and edited in digital video, six trailers are available online, five of which consist of the entire film, fastforwarded to different speeds.⁶⁰ Second, the excerpts posted on YouTube of Bill Morrison's *Decasia* (2002), a found-footage film that forms a meditation on the death inherent to the filmic image, forms a compelling confrontation between old and new media.⁶¹ And third, though not necessarily a cinematic event, in 2010 the Guggenheim Museum organized its first edition of *YouTube Play*, a biennial 'exhibition' of creative videos produced for online distribution.⁶²

The last example also brings me to the third space into which cinema increasingly moves: the museum. It does so primarily in the form of screening series – museums increasingly taking over the role of traditional art house cinemas – as well as in the form of film and video installations, whether or not in combination with other art practices. As Erika Balsom points out, in the gallery cinema regains the aura it was once said to destroy:

Salvaged from the ruins of twentieth-century mass culture ... within the white cube the cinema becomes precious. Instead of engaging the inherent capability of the medium as mechanically reproducible, 16mm gallery practice marshals an economy of purposeful rarity, restricting production of film prints to a limited edition, most often of between three and six copies, which are then sold by commercial galleries as collectible objects d'art.⁶³

Had cinema died, the museum would have been its mortuary, the institution where dead bodies are temporarily preserved and kept on view, and where people go to mourn the loss of a beloved one, or to investigate a victim's cause of death. But since cinema has not died I would prefer to think of the museum as a cinematic sanatorium, though only in the very specific form this place assumes in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg/The Magic Mountain* (1924). When Hans Castorp, the sympathetic antihero of Mann's novel, first ascends from the 'flatlands' to the magic mountain in order to pay a visit to his cousin, he plans to stay for only three weeks. It is only in the thin air of the Swiss Alps that the severity of his condition manifests itself, three weeks quickly turning into three months, and three months into seven years. From what does Hans suffer? Probably just from the passing of time itself. More than as a place of recovery, the novel's sanatorium appears as a place to pass time and where time passes, where time dilates, and where one could easily stay forever if only the mountain's magic were not periodically disturbed by flatland reality.

Yet fanciful analogies must not be pressed too far, because Mann's novel ends sadly, with Hans's disappearance into an uncertain future in

64 Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg*
(Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer
Verlag, 1981), p. 1006 (my
translation).

the trenches of World War I. 'Farewell, honest Hans Castorp', the novel bids its protagonist, 'life's worrisome child', goodbye, 'your tale is told'.⁶⁴ The story of cinema, fortunately, for now remains open ended. And while those believing in the medium's death stand mourning at its empty grave, cinema's old and new forms continue to spread out over the flatlands.

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The long shadow of the New German Cinema: *Deutschland 09, Deutschland im Herbst* and national film culture

PAUL COOKE

In August 2007, Tom Tykwer and the German television channel NDR (*Norddeutscher Rundfunk*) brought together a group of well-known filmmakers to discuss an omnibus film project that would explore the state of the nation in the first decade of the new millennium, years in which the industry has enjoyed levels of success at home and abroad it has not experienced for decades. The result, *Deutschland 09: 13 kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation/Germany 09: 13 Short Films About the State of the Nation*, opened at the Berlin Film Festival two years later to great fanfare, although it received somewhat mixed reviews. Leaving aside the aesthetic qualities of the various contributions to the film itself for the moment, its very existence offers a useful starting point for an examination of contemporary German cinema in a number of ways. Germany seems particularly prone to this type of ‘stocktaking’ treatment by filmmakers, a tradition to which the title of Tykwer’s project itself alludes. *Deutschland 09* recalls Roberto Rossellini’s classic of postwar Italian neorealism *Germania, anno zero/Germany Year Zero* (1948), set amongst the rubble of Berlin, as well as Jean-Luc Godard’s *Allemagne 90 neuf zero/Germany Year 90 Nine Zero* (1991) which, in a pun on Rossellini’s title, posited the moment of German unification as a new (neuf) year zero for the nation. Nor is it the only domestic film of recent years to use an omnibus format to examine contemporary society. Harald Siebler’s lesser-known *GG19: eine Reise durch Deutschland in 19 Artikeln/GG19: a Journey through Germany in Nineteen Articles* (2007), for example, presents a series of

shorts based on the first nineteen articles of the German Constitution, which set out the 'Fundamental Rights' of each citizen. The self-declared inspiration for *Deutschland 09*, however, was probably the best-known omnibus film to come out of Germany in the postwar period, *Deutschland im Herbst/Germany in Autumn* (1978), a collective response by some of the most internationally renowned directors of the New German Cinema to the events of the so-called 'German Autumn'. This refers to a period of three months in 1977 that saw an increase in violent attacks by the urban terrorist group *Rote Armee Fraktion*, or Red Army Faction (RAF), culminating in the deaths of its founding members Jan-Carl Raspe, Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader in their high-security prison Stammheim, as well as one of the group's high-profile kidnap victims, the industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer.

For many commentators comparison with the earlier film simply flagged up the aesthetic and political inadequacies of Tykwer's project. Instead of evoking the acerbic critique of the New German Cinema, it prompted Christian Buß to declare in *Der Spiegel* that '*Opas Kino* [Grandpa's cinema] is back. ... It is a conservative film of a particularly bitter kind, in that the Left has become conservative.'¹ Recalling the attacks made by the signatories of the 'Oberhausen Manifesto' on the apparently reactionary popular cinema of the 1950s which it provocatively declared 'dead', Buß suggested that these contemporary filmmakers had, in fact, returned to the mores of that decade.² Thus if *Deutschland 09* evokes the position of the New German Cinema specifically, or more broadly that of the protest generation of the late 1960s from which many of these filmmakers came, it is the position of those who have now themselves grown up and lost their anger towards their parents. Any continuities between *Deutschland 09* and *Deutschland im Herbst* seem to lie largely in the ability of Germany's generous subsidy system to produce films that no-one wants to see: 'Cheers to the German film subsidy system!' wrote the *Tagesspiegel* in its ironic repost to the film, published under the headline: 'Why our country is so great'.³

Deutschland im Herbst and *Deutschland 09* are clearly very different, most obviously in structural terms. While the former interweaves the work of its various artists, the latter consists of a series of self-contained short films, each identified by an individual title and filmmaker. However, critical reception of Tykwer's project failed to notice the thematic links between the two films, as well as the numerous aesthetic echoes which allow us to explore key continuities as well as important differences between these two moments in the development of German cinema. In this essay I wish to read *Deutschland 09* alongside *Deutschland im Herbst* to explore the reasons why a group of contemporary filmmakers should choose to look back to a film made thirty-one years earlier. Specifically, I examine the ways in which the New German Cinema continues to cast a shadow over contemporary cultural production, suggesting that this influence can be understood within the broader context of recent manifestations of nostalgia for some of the certainties of pre-unification

1 Christian Buß, 'Dann lieber Mario Barth', *Spiegel Online*, 25 March 2009, <<http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/0,1518,615349,00.html>> accessed 12 May 2011.

2 The 'Oberhausen Manifesto' was published during the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival in 1962 and is generally seen as a key foundational document of the New German Cinema. A group of twenty-six filmmakers, including Alexander Kluge and Edgar Reitz, declared in the manifesto the need for German cinema to be freed from what they saw as the economic stranglehold of the mainstream industry in order to revitalize film as an art form. For further discussion, see Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: a History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 20–25.

3 'Warum unser Land so toll ist: eine Antwort auf Deutschland 09', *Tagesspiegel*, 26 March 2009. Ironically, however, it might be noted that *Deutschland im Herbst* was one of the few films of the time that did not need public subsidy to cover its production costs, since most of those involved agreed to waive their fees.

4 For further discussion, see Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany since Unification: from Colonization to Nostalgia* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 27–59.

5 For further discussion, see Barbara Mennel, 'Political nostalgia and local memory: the Kreuzberg of the 1980s in contemporary German film', *The Germanic Review*, vol. 82, no. 1 (2007), pp. 54–77.

society. A particularly prominent trend in German cinema of the past decade has been the representation and dissection of *Ostalgie*, a much discussed phenomenon that involves the nostalgic recuperation of aspects of life in the former GDR.⁴ More recently, *Westalgie* films have also begun nostalgically to revisit aspects of pre-unification West German culture, an acknowledgement of the fact that unification did not only bring about the end of the GDR but also of the old Federal Republic.⁵ Although, on the face of it, *Deutschland 09* appears to be far removed from these types of film, it is nonetheless informed by a nostalgic reevaluation of West German culture in which the New German Cinema is retrospectively reframed as a coherent cinematic 'project', in contrast to the ostensibly more disparate landscape of contemporary film. A comparison with *Deutschland im Herbst* highlights the impossibility of recapturing this past in *Deutschland 09*. At the same time it reveals continuities in the national preoccupations of German filmmakers. As I shall discuss, national specificity appears to be challenged at a time when the country's elites have declared the final postwar 'normalization' of the nation, when Germany can at last put its past behind it and be treated like any other western democracy. Simultaneously, it is a preoccupation which seems at odds with the growing trend towards transnational cultural production that might appear to undermine the significance of national film culture.

A wide variety of filmmakers were connected to the New German Cinema, and although only a few were involved in *Deutschland im Herbst* it is a film that speaks to a number of the core values of many involved. Through the careful stewardship of Alexander Kluge, working closely with his editor Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, the film combines the individualist sensibilities of *Autorenkino* – a German variation on auteur cinema – with a neo-Marxist desire for a collective political response to the German Autumn, carefully knitting together its various individual segments into a single film. Framed by documentary footage of the funerals of Schleyer and the RAF terrorists, the film utilizes a range of forms, from World War II newsreels, melodramatic narrative sequences, real and staged interviews, stills of paintings and poems, voiceover commentaries, and fragments of classical and popular music, in an attempt to capture what its creators perceived to be a collective hysteria that had taken hold of society at the time.

Numerous themes emerge from the film. Most obviously it explores the continuum of fascist violence that the student movement saw as a defining feature of twentieth-century German history, as well as its present-day legacies. Images of Rosa Luxemburg's murder at the beginning of the Weimar Republic at the hand of rightwing paramilitaries are set against footage from the state funeral of Field Marshal Rommel, who was forced to commit suicide by Hitler – and whose son, Mayor of Stuttgart at the time of the German Autumn, appears in the film to explain his controversial decision to sanction the public funeral of the RAF terrorists. These scenes are juxtaposed with fictional sequences that highlight the impact of this continuum on the present. In so doing, the film argues for

the nation to undertake a process of 'collective mourning', as Thomas Elsaesser puts it, in order finally to come to terms with a past that, although ignored by contemporary society, remains ever present.⁶ In one of the few segments in the film that can be clearly identified as the work of an individual filmmaker, Fassbinder plays himself on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Set largely within the claustrophobic confines of his Munich flat, his heightened emotional state continually erupts into physically and psychologically abusive attacks on his lover Armin. These scenes are intercut with a staged interview with his mother, during which he browbeats the woman, his anger at both his antagonists provoked by their apparent failure to reject the past and to embrace democracy in the face of present societal tensions. The ultimate irony, however, is that his behaviour points to continuing fascistic traits in his own personality, an irony which simultaneously undermines his moral position while effectively underlining the value of his critique.

Other key themes raised not only by this film but by many New German Cinema filmmakers include the intergenerational tensions that were at the heart of the upheavals of the time, be they reflected in the letter read by Kluge from Schleyer to his son before his murder, or in Fassbinder's staged interrogation of his mother, where he finally forces her to admit what one senses he knows she has always believed, namely that West Germany needs to suspend its democratic institutions and find a new authoritarian leader. Not one like Hitler, she assures her son, rather one who is 'nice and kind'. Elsewhere we are given glimpses into the lives of West Germany's immigrant workforce, compelled to exist on the periphery of the main events that are portrayed. While the German ruling elite or the leftist protestors, invariably from bourgeois backgrounds, speak at the framing funerals, it is immigrant labour that stands by ready to fill in the graves or to resume work after the three-minute silence has been observed in the factories Schleyer once ran. The film also draws attention to the exclusion of women's voices from the mainstream media. We see, for example, the history teacher Gabi Teichert (Hannelore Hoger), who reappears as the lead in Kluge's next feature film *Die Patriotin/The Female Patriot* (1979), take notes at the SPD party conference, listening to the middle-aged male speakers on stage. On another occasion the political activist Franziska Busch (Katja Rupé) is brushed aside by her male colleagues as she tries to ask them a question about an interview her group has just filmed with the reformed RAF member Horst Mahler. Kluge informs us in voiceover that Busch herself is a filmmaker. Her male colleagues, however, offer no support in taking any of her projects forward, an allusion to the broader issue of discrimination against women which led to the formation of the *Verband Deutscher Filmarbeiterinnen* (Women's Film Workers Union) in the late 1970s.

The call for a broader range of the population to be given access to the means of visual representation, which was central to the work of the Women's Film Workers Union as well as the feminist film movement as a whole, is a key theme of the film's critique of contemporary German

7 Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: the Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 26.

8 Chris Homewood, 'Challenging the taboo: the memory of West Germany's terrorist past in Andres Veiel's *Black Box BRD* (2001)', *New Cinemas*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2007), p. 117.

9 Miriam Hansen, 'Cooperative auteur cinema and oppositional public sphere: Alexander Kluge's contribution to *Germany in Autumn*', *New German Critique*, nos 24/25 (1981), p. 53.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

society. The film problematizes the social function of the visual media, its possibilities and limitations, and in particular the place of the New German Cinema itself as a representational tool for presenting images of the nation to audiences. As Anton Kaes notes, on the face of it the film imitates the style of a television programme. However, it is a programme that would hardly have appeared in the schedules of the German public broadcasters who monopolized the airwaves at the time.⁷ Instead the film narrates stories taking place at the periphery of those being shown in the mainstream media, which were, in Chris Homewood's words, 'rapidly instrumentalising the immediate past to create an imagined German community of complete solidarity against the terrorist threat'.⁸ The film reveals the tensions at the heart of a society gripped by self-destructive paranoia in the face of terrorist violence, presented as part of a complex nexus of consequences it must confront, due to its failure to come to terms with its Nazi past. Thus the footage of the two funerals that frame the film does not focus on the main speakers. Instead, along with the immigrant workforce which services them, the camera lingers on the large number of heavily armed security forces, on other camera crews reporting the funerals for the mainstream media, and on the ESSO flags that frame the cemetery where Schleyer is being buried. This latter image alludes to Schleyer's connections with US-sponsored multinational capitalism and to his past as a member of the Nazi SS. The film also features a number of characters united by a thematic connection to food production: the caterers at the state reception that follows Schleyer's memorial service; a landlord who agreed to provide a far more modest reception for Gudrun Ensslin's family against much local pressure; and a Turkish immigrant, stopped by the police outside Schleyer's cemetery, who carries a rifle to shoot a pigeon for his still more modest lunch.

In such segments Kluge's signature is very clear, his use of an open-ended form of montage allowing, as Miriam Hansen suggests, 'space for contingencies, contradictions, inconsistencies to unfold – ruptures in which the viewer's own imagination can begin to work'.⁹ Hansen understands Kluge's approach as 'a realism of protest rather than a realism which merely duplicates the "wicked fiction of reality"', as Kluge himself puts it.¹⁰ In this respect the film resists a straightforward teleological reading, which in turn undermines any understanding of Germany itself as a straightforwardly representable concept. This is suggested not only in the specific narrative content each segment relates, but also in the diversity in rhythm and difference in dramatic intensity between the individual contributions. The overwhelming emotional pace of the Fassbinder segment, for example, is immediately contrasted with a slow montage of paintings depicting Germany as a Romantic rural idyll to a soundtrack of Haydn's *Kaiserquartett*, the melody for the German national anthem. On the one hand, the montage suggests a lost, more peaceful and better Germany, removed from the hysteria in Fassbinder's flat where we have left him crying in the arms of his lover. On the other, the use of still images disrupts the forward motion of the film itself, retarding narrative

11 Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006).

12 Christian Braad Thomsen, *Fassbinder: the Life and Work of a Provocative Genius*, trans. Martin Chalmers (London: Faber, 1997), p. 6.

13 Rachel Palfreyman, 'The Fourth Generation: legacies of violence as quest for identity in post-unification terrorism films', in David Clarke (ed.), *German Cinema Since Unification* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 35.

development and forcing the spectator to reflect on these images *as images* and not as part of the narrative. This in turn draws the spectator's attention to the very nature of film as a material medium, and, as Laura Mulvey has argued, to the still image that provides the basis for the illusion of the moving picture.¹¹

Fassbinder's segment also alludes to the materiality of film as a representational medium. The director prepares to film a sequence for his 1980 television adaptation, then in production, of Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. He records his instructions into a tape recorder, 'Franz, now in semi-closeup, looks through the door. He appears to be very lonely. He turns ...'. At this point Fassbinder stops speaking, caught in semi-closeup as he turns to look into the hallway, listening to an approaching police siren. The onscreen director talks us through the mechanics behind the cinematic image that he himself now constitutes. In press interviews and published texts, Fassbinder frequently mentioned his strong identification with the character of Franz Biberkopf; his invocation in *Deutschland im Herbst* is thus no surprise.¹² More importantly, this moment of self-reflexivity points to a broader issue at stake in the film's presentation of the auteur. Fassbinder's demeanour selfconsciously performs his public persona as 'provocative genius', highlighting, as Rachel Palfreyman puts it, 'the primacy of performance over documentary record' in the segment.¹³ In so doing, however, Fassbinder undermines the very dichotomy of fictional performance and factual documentary, revealing the mediated, constructed nature of everything we see on screen, be it the censored images provided by public television broadcasters, which provoked the film in the first place, or the apparently more legitimate authentic images presented by the New German Cinema.

Despite its structural difference to the earlier film, on a thematic level Tykwer's *Deutschland 09* similarly presents a German society in crisis, provoked by numerous factors, not least of which, the film suggests in its strongest echo of *Deutschland im Herbst*, is the government's perceived overreaction to the threat of terrorism. Hans Weingartner's contribution *Gefährder/Preventative Action*, for example, is based on true events and tells the story of an academic who is arrested by the security services under suspicion of collaborating with leftwing terrorists. The 'proof' of his 'crime' is the simultaneous appearance of the word 'gentrification' in one of his books and a pamphlet produced by militant extremists. The segment explores the impact this arrest has on the fundamental constitutional principle that a citizen is innocent until proven guilty. As in *Deutschland im Herbst*, the spectator is presented with the image of a ruling elite that is all too ready to suspend civil rights when it perceives itself under threat. Similarly the episode addresses the psychological impact the state's actions have on innocent victims. In a final shot that recalls the close of the Fassbinder sequence in the earlier film, the man and his wife embrace on the floor of their flat, exhausted by the emotional strain of their experience. Fatih Akin's contribution also echoes Fassbinder in his exploration of the 'war on terror'. Akin recreates an

interview between the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper and the German-born Turkish citizen Murat Kurnaz upon his release from Guantánamo Bay, where he was imprisoned for four years without charge and where he claims to have been tortured by the USA with the full knowledge of the German authorities. The implication is that the German government continues to be in cahoots with the USA, just as its West German forebear was in the 1970s, and this despite the public rifts between the US President and the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder over the invasion of Iraq.

Yet another analogy with Fassbinder's segment is provided by Dani Levy's short, which features a filmmaker who performs the role of a director in a film within a film. *Joshua* plays with a number of popular generic conventions to offer a surreal satirical take on the drive for 'normalization'. This has been a much discussed term in German political discourse since the 1980s, and has become a key political tenet since unification, with successive governments calling for the country to put its past behind it and be treated like any other 'normal' European country.¹⁴ The piece opens in documentary mode, with a sequence of vox pops in which Levy asks the public for 'a few words to describe Germany'. Responses range from 'We are the pope' to 'We lost the war', the vast majority either focusing on bad experiences or simply having nothing to say. The film cuts to Levy, now in a psychiatrist's office, adopting a paranoid tone redolent of Woody Allen's early comedies, as he plays this same sequence to his doctor – proof, the director claims, of the parlous state of the nation. The doctor rejects Levy's world view, accusing him of deliberately seeking to paint a bleak picture. Typical of the non-PC approach that characterizes Levy's work as a whole, the psychiatrist declares that Levy's attitude is 'normal' for a man of his age and religion (Levy is Jewish) but fundamentally unhealthy. As an antidote, Levy is prescribed a wonder drug which changes his impression of the world, presenting Germany in a more positive light. The film now mutates into a musical fantasy world. However, even in this happy state there are worrying signs that all is not well with the nation. If the drug allows him to see Germany as a contented society, it also suggests that this is a society where every Muslim is secretly planning a bomb attack. Germany remains a society with a deep-seated attraction to fascism, given shape in the segment's alternative reality in the world's 'first National Socialist village' – to be found, it would seem from the look of the village, somewhere in the eastern provinces. The film plays on the absurdity of Nazi ideology in a contemporary context as the village declares a child (played by Levy's own young son), barely three years old and Jewish, as their new *Führer*. In Levy's final analysis, beneath the utopian veneer of a happy, 'normal' nation lurks the legacy of Germany's unsavoury past which, the director fears, could easily return, particularly if his society were to be confronted with a period of economic hardship as it was in the 1920s.

¹⁴ For further discussion of normalization debates, see Simon Bulmer and William E. Paterson, 'Germany and the European Union: from "tamed power" to "normalized power"?', *International Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 5 (2010), pp. 1051–73.

Even though *Deutschland 09* was made before the full impact of the 'credit crunch' and the global recession of the late 2000s was realized, a number of the contributions appear to anticipate what was to come. Wolfgang Becker's *Krankes Haus/Sick House*, opting like Levy for a satirical format, deals with Germany's much beloved ideal of a Social Market Economy. This system has underpinned a generous welfare system since the 1950s, but in Becker's segment it is portrayed in the guise of an old man on the verge of death being rushed into the emergency room of the 'Germany Clinic'. The doctors are unable to find a cure, fighting over both the cause of his illness and the best treatment. Should this be the 'shock therapy' of market deregulation in order to put an apparent anachronism out of its misery and to allow the country to embrace the opportunities of globalization? Or can a 'transfusion' of further subsidies keep him alive a little longer? Meanwhile the clinic itself gradually drowns in a sea of bureaucracy and wasted energy, in the depths of which a George W. Bush lookalike terrorizes a dark-skinned patient. The theme of the dangerous global influence the USA continues to exert pervades the film, not least in Tykwer's own contribution, *Feierlich Reist/Feierlich Travels*, in which globalization is synonymous with Americanization, the whole planet being homogenized under the banner of Starbucks.

As can be seen from this description of just a few of the film's segments, *Deutschland 09* offers numerous points of continuity with *Deutschland im Herbst*, along with the broader critical agenda of the 1960s protest generation. As well as a strong sense of anti-Americanism, updated to reflect contemporary concerns about globalization and terrorism, one also finds a continued exploration of the place of migrant workers within German society. Yet just as Becker's sideswipe at the US president does not ignore the possibility that Germany might actually need to go through the pain of social reform if it is to cope with a globalizing world, the invocation of the agenda of the New German Cinema also highlights the ways in which society has changed. In place of an interview with the terrorist Horst Mahler in *Deutschland im Herbst*, Romuald Karmaker's *Rameses* presents an at times endearing portrait of an Iranian brothel-keeper. Having worked in Germany for many decades, at sixty-eight he is ready to retire. Lamenting the lack of professional pride amongst the female sex workers he now employs, he complains that his neighbourhood has been taken over by foreigners. This migrant worker is himself now an exploiter of migrant labour, becoming in the process fully integrated into German society. Ironically this is, of course, proof of Germany's increasingly multicultural makeup, even as Rameses laments this development. Karmakar's episode illustrates a key difference to the representation of immigrant workers in *Deutschland im Herbst*, where the perspective is firmly that of the non-migrant observer, be they the security forces or the filmmakers themselves. Moreover, the new film problematizes the very term 'migrant' in relation to Germany's ethnic minorities today, when a generation of children born in the country does not have full citizenship, as in the case of Murat Kurnaz. And, as is also

evident from Akin's piece which presents the experience of one such individual, while the filmmakers might now allow the voices of ethnic minorities to speak for themselves, not all their subjects have as much affection as Rameses for the German state, or at least for its ruling elite. The continuity of attitudes which date back to the fascist past becomes all the more troubling from the perspective of Akin's presentation of the Kurnaz case when one realizes that the SPD–Green government at the time of Kurnaz's imprisonment was populated by key figures of the 1960s student movement who did nothing to protect his human rights. These included the former German Home Secretary Otto Schily, who had been the defence lawyer for members of the RAF in the 1970s.

The legacy of the 1960s and 1970s is examined most explicitly in Nicolette Krebitz's contribution *Die Unvollendete/The Unfinished*, which stages an imaginary meeting between the sixteen-year-old child-prodigy author, director and actress Helene Hegemann and two feminist icons who represent diametrically opposed traditions, US cultural commentator Susan Sontag and leftwing militant Ulrike Meinhof. Sontag is caricatured by Krebitz as an apolitical bohemian aesthete while Meinhof embodies the clichéd image of a radical political activist – austere, serious and rigidly moralistic. Using the writings of Sontag and Meinhof as the basis of a dialogue set in 1969 – just before Meinhof became a member of the RAF – the film presents Hegemann's imagined journey back in time as if it were a leap into the terrorist underworld that Meinhof would subsequently make, allowing her to take stock of these earlier forms of feminist politics. Once again society has moved on, and Hegemann's initial attraction to Meinhof, in particular, is eventually revised. Many of the problems the women discuss continue to resonate, including patriarchy, motherhood and childcare. The film, however, suggests that feminist role models of the 1960s and 1970s can no longer offer solutions to the young women of Hegemann's generation: Sontag's championing of artistic self-realization now appears anachronistic, Meinhof's turn to violence misconceived. There is no need for Hegemann to adopt the tactics of these women, however much she might long nostalgically for their immediacy and energy. In a further revision of *Deutschland im Herbst*, Hegemann's inclusion also suggests that the representational possibilities available to her generation of women filmmakers is greater than that of the New German Cinema, testified by Hegemann's own status and meteoric rise within the industry.

The revisiting of *Deutschland im Herbst*'s examination of who has the right to speak, which is central to Krebitz's contribution, brings us back to the question of cinematic representation itself and the ways in which *Deutschland 09* foregrounds its own medium as a cultural form able to narrate the nation's stories. Although each segment remains a discrete unit, collectively, like *Deutschland im Herbst*, the film juxtaposes popular generic conventions and documentary with recycled archival images. In so doing it explores, in Mulvey's terms, the ways in which cinema itself increasingly became 'a source of collective memory of the twentieth

15 Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p. 25.

16 Presseheft, *Deutschland 09: 13 Filme zur Lage der Nation* (Berlin: Piffit Medien, 2009), p. 9.

century for those who missed living through it'.¹⁵ In a number of segments, as the filmmakers explore the question of German national identity, they also test the representational limits of visual images and comment on the status of film as a medium in the digital age. Dominik Graf and Martin Gressmann, for example, rework a motif of Alexander Kluge's *Brutalität in Stein/Brutality in Stone* (1960), using Super-8 film stock to capture crumbling buildings in Munich, Frankfurt am Main, Duisburg and Berlin as a metaphor for the loss of the past. The grainy quality of the images emphasizes their ephemeral nature, highlighting the extent to which today's Berlin Republic seems just as intent as the West German ruling elite of the 1960s and 1970s upon erasing its history. The film stock highlights its own 'materiality', as Graf puts it, providing an antidote to the airbrush perfection of digital photography.¹⁶ This materiality becomes part of the images it conveys and impacts upon their perception by audiences, images that, the film reveals, mutate over time as our historical distance to events increases. Their hue gradually changes as their colour pigment decays. We will never be able to see these buildings in the way they had been seen 'in reality', a voiceover explains, and yet their visual reproduction on film becomes a new 'reality' that continues to evolve with the film stock's pigment over time.

Graf and Gressmann's piece is contrasted in the two segments by Angela Schanelec and Christoph Hochhäusler that frame the film. These set the context for the rest of the film, both in terms of its philosophical exploration of the meaning of contemporary 'Germany' and also its relationship to its own medium. In contrast to Graf and Gressmann, Schanelec's *Erster Tag/First Day* focuses on the potential of the camera to capture the immediacy of physical reality in a slowly paced collage of images of dawn breaking over the nation. Like *Deutschland im Herbst*, the segment plays with the notion of speed to trouble straightforward, teleological readings of the nation, questioning the headlong rush towards globalization that is problematized more explicitly elsewhere in *Deutschland 09*. A series of long takes offers glimpses of the challenges of modern life: a working mother concerned that her child at home will turn the cooker off; a man stumbling as he crosses a city street; the sound of a high-speed train bisecting an otherwise still landscape, its violent squeal cutting through the peace of the dawn. However, these are fleeting disturbances. The dominant mood is of calm reflection on a moment of peace that will inevitably give way to the stress of the day, culminating in a particularly long take of a mist-covered lake. The surrounding trees are reflected in the water, accompanied by the diegetic rumble of a nearby road which is pushed into the background of the spectator's consciousness by the more immediate sound of bird calls. This is a living embodiment of the type of Romantic image found in *Deutschland im Herbst*, discussed above. This *tableau vivant* of the German landscape highlights the continued power and relevance within national discourses of certain cultural tropes, directly invoking the affective potential of the natural world which was at the core of the Romantic tradition, and of the

17 For further discussion of the *Heimat* tradition in German popular cinema, see Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

filmmaker's obvious connection to it. In this sense, the segment is an expression of Schanelec's *Heimat*, a crucially important but much maligned term in German culture generally and cinema specifically, given the rejection of the 1950s *Heimat* film as the worst kind of *Opas Kino* by the New German Cinema.¹⁷ The *Heimat* film, with its representation of community life in the German rural provinces, has a long tradition and has, of late, experienced something of a revival, not least in the work of Hans Steinbichler who also contributes to Tykwer's project. His films *Hierankl* (2003) and *Winterreise/Winter Journey* (2006) critically engage with the *Heimat* tradition, challenging its sentimentality while also celebrating the place of the rural province in his protagonists' sense of selfhood. In *Fraktur*, however, his contribution to *Deutschland 09*, Steinbichler's engagement with the *Heimat* tradition has far more in common with the anti-*Heimat* critique to be found in the work of the New German Cinema and its deconstruction of the kind of rural idyll that populated the 1950s *Heimat* films. A middle-aged business man (Josef Bierbichler) leaves the serene peace of his country retreat in the Bavarian Alps in order to confront the editorial board of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* – the country's main conservative-leaning newspaper – for changing its font. This is a wilful attack on traditional German values, the man feels, a symbol of the erosion of German culture found throughout his society. For their part in this, the board must pay with their lives. Thus, what begins with an invocation of the German countryside as *Heimat* sanctuary mutates into a horror film in which the rural provinces are presented as Germany's repressed nationalist underbelly that might irrationally erupt at any moment, the fascist undertones of the man's aggression implied in the location of his villa in Berchtesgaden, very near to Hitler's Berghof mountain residence. Schanelec, conversely, celebrates the potential of *Heimat*. Unlike Steinbichler, she eschews any engagement with the *Heimat* film as a set of generic conventions to focus wholly on the immediate, affective power of landscape, while also distancing the spectator from it by holding her shot too long. This technique forces the audience to reflect upon the image it is witnessing, aware that this is a passing moment that one must not miss.

If Schanelec's segment evokes the moment of creation in her title, a moment also reflected in her focus on the birth of a new day, Hochhäusler, by contrast, closes *Deutschland 09* by exploring a postapocalyptic vision of humanity. A male voiceover narrates a parable in which the human race, having been forced to evacuate an Earth depleted of all natural resources, sets up a colony on the Moon. In an attempt to build a new life for themselves, society's rulers begin to wipe the population's memories of the past. However, complete eradication fails and the past returns one day when a woman escapes the colony and writes the word 'Deutschland' in the sand, provoking a popular rebellion among people who do not understand the emotions this word stirs within them. Through his parable, Hochhäusler articulates but also refuses to answer the question posed throughout the film as to the meaning of Germany in 2009. However, in a

similar fashion to the filmmakers of *Deutschland im Herbst*, he sets the parameters by which an answer might be found. Hochhäusler promotes a continued engagement with the nation's history, through which society can attempt to come to terms with the disparate set of emotions that are evoked when it reflects upon the state of the nation, here portrayed in the construction of the very term 'Deutschland' as affect. At the same time, Hochhäusler's segment offers a counterpoint to Schanelec's piece in terms of cinematic representation: Schanelec emphasizes film's ability to capture an immediate reality; Hochhäusler, by contrast, investigates cinema's ability to convey a fiction. The male narrator's voice is accompanied by a visual collage of curious, sometimes unrecognizable objects: pictures from books, paintings, family photographs, the Brownian motion of milk being poured into a cup of coffee, shots of a study in disarray. All these images are taken from the flat of an elderly couple we never meet.¹⁸ However, each object is recontextualized, endowed with a new meaning in light of the audio commentary it complements. A family snapshot becomes an image of a woman escaping the Moon colony, while an iconic photograph of a pile of reading glasses collected from Holocaust victims in Auschwitz becomes a symbol of the lost world of Earth for the Moon's new inhabitants. The narrator's voice stretches the indexical link between the image and its original representational context to breaking point. The glasses, for a moment, do indeed become the glasses that the population had to leave behind as it evacuated Earth, highlighting the power of the moving image to create its own reality. Yet, ultimately, Hochhäusler returns to Schanelec's aesthetic position and the function of the camera as a tool to capture 'reality'. The visual illusion is not sustainable. Almost immediately we remember where we have seen this image before. The index cannot be severed completely from the image. The Holocaust, along with Germany's past more broadly, invoked in several of the images, serves as an important point of reference in the nation's twentieth-century history. That said, it also points to the wider issue at stake in the parable, as well as the film as a whole, namely the nature of Germany and Germanness. The indexical link between the people in the parable and the notion of Germany itself as affect, as the source of a set of irresolvable emotions, remains no matter how hard the population's rulers wish to remove it.

Deutschland 09 offers a diverse set of responses to the question 'What is Germany', the film's images often presenting a less typical impression of the notion than that found in much mainstream German cinema. This is perhaps surprising given the people who came together to produce the film. The core of the creative team behind *Deutschland 09* is connected to X-Filme Creative Pool, a company set up in 1994 that has played a key role in the renaissance of the German industry since the late 1990s, producing and distributing films by some of the country's leading filmmakers. Interestingly, however, the segments many of these directors created for *Deutschland 09* are markedly different from the rest of their oeuvre, the typically irreverent tone of Levy's piece notwithstanding.

Akın's short, for example, departs in style and content from the transnational melodramas that have made him one of the country's most critically acclaimed contemporary filmmakers (*Gegen die Wand/Head On* [2004] and *Auf der anderen Seite/The Edge of Heaven* [2007]). Similarly Becker's piece has little in common with his bitter-sweet coming-of-age *Ostalgie* comedy *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), one of a number of major international commercial successes for German filmmakers during the decade. Indeed the film presents a very different image of Germany than that to be found in films that are generally distributed internationally. Absent is the heritage genre that has been marketed very successfully beyond German borders since 2000 (such as Oliver Hirschbiegel's *Der Untergang/Downfall* [2003] and Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others* [2006]). At the other end of the spectrum, neither does *Deutschland 09* feature the work of comedians such as Tom Gerhardt (*7 Zwerge – Männer allein im Wald/7 Dwarves* [Sven Unterwaldt, Jr, 2004]) or Michael 'Bully' Herbig (*Der Schuh des Manitu/The Shoe of Manitu* [2001] and *(T)Raumschiff Surprise – Periode 1/Dreamship Surprise – Periode 1* [2004]), whose films regularly break box-office records in the domestic market.¹⁹

Given the success of German film both at home and abroad in the last decade, it is perhaps inevitable that Tykwer and his colleagues would look back to the New German Cinema, since it was during its heyday that the nation's filmmakers last enjoyed similar levels of critical acclaim. However, for Tykwer there is a greater sense of affinity with this earlier generation than simply having achieved a comparable level of success. As Tykwer himself puts it, almost plaintively, 'Of course [my] generation doesn't have as strong an emblematic identity as the New German Cinema of the 1970s had. But for a long time I have had the sense that a certain identity has developed, albeit a far more disparate one.'²⁰ The extent to which it is possible to have a 'disparate' identity is, of course, questionable, as is the validity of the term 'generation' to describe the group of filmmakers involved in this project. Contrasting, for example, Dominik Graf, a filmmaker particularly well known for his television work who was born in 1952, with Tykwer born in 1965 or Hochhäusler in 1972, it is clear that this group does not constitute a single generation. Moreover, the notion that the New German Cinema had an 'emblematic identity' is equally debatable. It comprised a similarly diverse group exploring a wide range of material, from the legacies of the Nazi regime, through gay rights to the classics of the nation's literary canon. It also adopted an equally broad range of aesthetic approaches, be they Kluge's 'essay films', the operatic narrative experimentation of Werner Schroeter or Fassbinder's reinterpretation of Hollywood genre cinema. Further, as Tim Bergfelder has argued, the New German Cinema was a relatively small part of German film production in the 1960s and 1970s, often competing with popular genres at the time, both in terms of box office and volume of production, for all the *Obenhausen* directors' declaration of the 'death' of such cinema.²¹

19 *Der Schuh des Manitu* achieved an audience of 10.5 million, *(T)Raumschiff Surprise* over nine million, figures that have only been beaten in recent memory by *Otto – Der Film* (Xaver Schwarzenberger and Otto Waalkes), the monster comedy hit of 1985, with its estimated fourteen million spectators. Figures taken from the 'Filmtitliste', Filmförderungsanstalt, <www.ffa.de> accessed 28 February 2009.

20 Presseheft, *Deutschland 09*, p. 2.

21 Tim Bergfelder, *International Adventures: Popular German Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2005), pp. 1–14.

Nonetheless, it is significant that the New German Cinema offers Tykwer a coherent sense of what it means to make 'German' films. And he is not alone. Although attention amongst scholars has broadened – from the investigation of a select canon of work by the likes of Fassbinder and Kluge on the one hand and the Weimar films of Lang and Murnau on the other – the nostalgic construction of the New German Cinema as an ideal blueprint of what German film *should* be remains central to much of the discussion. In the most recent manifestation of what Klaus Kreimeier identifies as German film culture's penchant for manifestos, the *Ludwigshafener Position*, published during the 2005 Ludwigshafen Festival of Film, firmly concurred with Oberhausen: 'German film will be art or it will not exist', declared its signatories, among them the actress Hanna Schygulla and filmmaker Peter Lilienthal, key figures within New German Cinema, as well as a number of artists who received their training from this generation. For Schygulla, Lilienthal and others, film must continue to be free to exist on its own terms in order to maintain a critical debate with its audience, forcing spectators to engage with, rather than passively consume, the images with which they are presented on the screen.²² This is a position that resonates strongly with many contemporary commentators on German film who lament what they view as the continued domination of a politically and aesthetically conservative 'cinema of consensus', identified by Eric Rentschler as a key characteristic of national film production in the 1990s.²³

Tykwer's film attests to a strong attraction towards the New German Cinema's 'project' – if it can be described in any sense as coherently as this – of holding the nation to account for its past and identifying ongoing tensions within contemporary society. As such, it can be seen as part of a broader trend towards the nostalgic recollection of pre-unification Germany on both sides of the former Iron Curtain. This can be found across German popular culture, be it in the rediscovery of certain GDR consumer brands, or in the 'Prada-Meinhof' clothing range, which reworked the look of 1970s West German urban terrorists (made famous by their pictures on the ubiquitous 'wanted' posters of the time) into a form of so-called 'terrorist chic' fashion. In contemporary cinema this tendency is also evident in a variety of films from Becker's *Good Bye, Lenin!* to Oskar Roehler's *Die Unberührbare/No Place to Go* (2000), which nostalgically recreate an idealized version of the GDR's socialist project or revisit elements of West German left-liberal utopianism. To a degree, *Deutschland 09*, like many of these films, reveals a longing in its creators for the political certainties of earlier times, where identities could be configured ideologically. This desire is made manifest in its attempt to update the key themes and motifs of *Deutschland im Herbst* for the Berlin Republic of the twenty-first century. At the same time, as is evident for example in Nicolette Krebitz's contribution, the film also highlights the lack of faith Tykwer and his colleagues exhibit in the certainties of the past, even as they are nostalgically invoked.

Such nostalgia offers an implicit rejection of the kind of contemporary 'normalization' pointed to in 1990s film production by Rentschler and

22 Klaus Kreimeier, *Kino und Filmindustrie in der BRD* (Kronberg: Scriptor, 1973), p. 78; Nicolai Albrecht, et al., 'Dokumentiert: Ludwigshafener Position', 10 July 2005, <http://www.infomedia-sh.de/index.php?page=nl_0508_ludwigshafener_position> accessed 12 May 2011.

23 Eric Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the post-wall cinema of consensus', in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (eds), *Cinema and Nation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 263. For further evidence of this trend, see Paul Cooke, 'Recent trends in German film studies', *Monatshefte*, vol. 102, no. 3 (2010), pp. 384–99.

24 Randall Halle, *German Film after Germany: Towards a Transnational Aesthetic* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008). See also Andrew Higson, 'The limiting imagination of national cinema', in Hjort and Mackenzie (eds), *Cinema and Nation*, pp. 63–74.

addressed throughout Tykwer's project. It similarly makes the case for the continued importance of a nationally specific film culture at a time when, as Randall Halle notes, the imperatives of globalization see contemporary film increasingly dominated by transnational modes of production and consumption, a shift that at times appears to make the notion of 'national cinema' itself anachronistic.²⁴ On a formal level, the film adopts a range of styles and conventions to be found in documentaries and popular genre cinemas around the world, most obviously in Levy's generic pastiche that ranges from a form of Jewish comedy redolent of the films of Woody Allen to the musical. Elsewhere the film recalls more avant-garde traditions, for example in Hochhäusler's *Séance* and its obvious debt to Chris Marker. To this extent the film works within a transnational nexus of influence. However, its most explicit point of reference remains the New German Cinema, both in terms of its self-proclaimed debt to *Deutschland im Herbst* and its primary function as a film that wishes to explore the decidedly national issues of German identity and the contemporary state of the German nation. Both *Deutschland im Herbst* and *Deutschland 09* point to the complex sets of emotions evoked by the concept of Germany. The ways in which these emotions are shaped by many of those involved in Tykwer's project resonate with the concerns raised by the likes of Fassbinder and Kluge. Yet while the film evokes the tradition of the New German Cinema, it fails to maintain the political certainties of the previous generation, highlighting important differences between these two moments in film history. Most obviously, *Deutschland 09* points to the potential for a more positive interpretation of German society's present direction in its inclusion of voices that were either excluded or spoken for in *Deutschland im Herbst*. There is also a renewed belief in the value of a specifically German cultural tradition in its invocation of Romantic motifs, be it in Schanelec's *tableaux* or in the collective rendition of the German folksong 'Kein schöner Land' ('No Land is More Lovely') which closes Becker's piece. As the world collapses around the protagonists of his segment, German culture can still comfort the inhabitants of this 'sick house'. It is precisely these images that caused critics to denounce the film as a conservative return to *Opas Kino*. However, as I have argued, the relationship of *Deutschland 09* to the 1950s is more complex than this critique would suggest. The film troubles easy categorization as either 'conservative' or 'progressive' in a manner that is typical of much contemporary cinema, this group of filmmakers seeking to negotiate rather than resolve the legacies of the past. This may involve the accommodation of political positions that, to the 1960s generation at least, might have appeared anathema – from the potential acceptance of globalization as a necessary evil in *Krankes Haus* to the sympathetic portrayal of an exploitative migrant brothel-keeper in *Rameses*. Nonetheless, for all the film's acceptance that the world has moved on, the artists collected here continue to cling to the New German Cinema as a key point of orientation in order to validate their own role as creators of a specifically national cinema with a mandate to comment on the meaning of 'Germany' in 2009.

***Standard Operating Procedure*, 'the mystery of photography' and the politics of pity**

THOMAS AUSTIN

One of the primary uses to which screen documentary has been put is to call attention to events that it declares, explicitly or implicitly, to be of historical and political significance. As Bill Nichols has argued, even when a documentary 'enters a terrain where history has already been textualized over and over again, in images as well as in words', it still has the potential to represent reality 'as though for the first time':

the [documentary] text locates on the person of its subjects, as it were, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions, and paradoxes of a historical moment, making them real, as though for the first time, because they are rendered with a specificity they have never had before.¹

Any such attempts must confront pressing questions of access and address. How are profilmic events encountered and mediated? Are they 'captured' on the spot, with the footage assembled at a later moment,² or are they (re)constructed via archive material, interviews and reenactments? What might be the consequences of using the latter techniques in particular? When the events referred to include violence, atrocity and suffering, how are audiences to respond? What political and ethical positions are they invited to take up in relation to what they see and hear? In this essay I pursue these issues via an examination of Errol Morris's *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008), which Morris has described as a 'non-fiction horror movie'.³ I consider linkages between the aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions of the film, which is both an

1 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 235–36.

2 See, for instance, *The Battle of Chile* (Patricio Guzmán, 1975, 1977, 1979), or *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* (Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Briain, 2003).

3 'Director Q and A', *Standard Operating Procedure*, <<http://www.sonyclassics.com/standardoperatingprocedure/site.html>> accessed 12 May 2011.

investigation of the mistreatment and torture of Iraqi inmates by US personnel at Abu Ghraib prison and an inquiry into the uses and limitations of photography as visible evidence, photographs being the means by which millions of people were first made aware of the abuses.

In its reframing of an already 'textualized' historical moment, *Standard Operating Procedure* draws on four audiovisual components: still photographs, interview testimony, reenactments of events recounted by the interviewees, and an orchestral score by Danny Elfman. The photographs include many of the now notorious images of torture and abuse carried out in Abu Ghraib in 2003. The interviews are with US soldiers and personnel, most notably five of the seven so-called 'bad apples', the low-ranking military police men and women (MPs) designated as such by the Bush administration in attempts to manage the outcry following publication of the pictures in 2004. The 'bad apples' appeared in many of the most controversial and graphic photographs of violence and humiliation, and were ultimately convicted of various charges relating to their conduct at Abu Ghraib. *Standard Operating Procedure* crosscuts between the photographs, interview footage and reenactments to pursue a double exploration: into events at Abu Ghraib, and into the photographic record of those events, a record both iconic and open to question.

Following the critical and commercial success of Morris's *The Fog of War* (2003), *Standard Operating Procedure* was something of a disappointment. Both films centre on disputed recent US histories and associated accusations of war crimes. However, while *The Fog of War* grossed more than \$4 million domestically and won an Oscar for best documentary, *Standard Operating Procedure* had a decidedly mixed critical reception and earned a mere \$229,000 in North America.⁴ One possible reason for their differing fates is signaled by the rating of each: PG-13 for *The Fog of War*, R (Restricted) for *Standard Operating Procedure*. The latter's rating ('for disturbing images and content including torture and graphic nudity, and for language') points to more graphic footage of the horrors of war than the firebombing of Tokyo or the Vietnam War, as depicted in *The Fog of War*.⁵

In addition, the aesthetics of *Standard Operating Procedure* proved highly controversial. While Morris's breakthrough film *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) was widely praised for its innovative use of selfconsciously stylized reenactments, a device which has since become something of a stylistic signature for him, the presence of this technique in *Standard Operating Procedure* elicited fierce criticism.⁶ For instance, Paul Arthur commented:

[The style of the reenactments] belongs to a film genre that provides titillation through horror. To employ this rhetoric in a documentary about actual horror is obscene, yielding familiar aesthetic thrills as a substitute for specificity of meaning.⁷

- 4 For a range of academic perspectives on *Standard Operating Procedure*, see the conference papers published in 'Reframing *Standard Operating Procedure*: Errol Morris and the creative treatment of Abu Ghraib', *Jump Cut*, no. 52 (2010), <<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc52.2010/index.html>> accessed 12 May 2011.
- 5 Another cause may be US audiences' fatigue with the topic of Iraq, due to extensive coverage in the news media. From 2004 to 2008 most other films on Iraq, both fiction and documentary, failed at the box office.
- 6 For a defence of the politics and aesthetics of *Standard Operating Procedure*, see Linda Williams, 'Cluster fuck: the forcible frame in Errol Morris' *Standard Operating Procedure*', *Camera Obscura*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2010), pp. 28–67. For a review praising the tension 'between art and disturbance, between beauty and pain', see Kenneth Turan, 'Standard Operating Procedure', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 May 2008, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-procedure2-2008may02_0,4331297.story> accessed 12 May 2011.
- 7 Paul Arthur, 'The horror', *Artforum International*, vol. 46, no. 8 (2008), p. 112. See also Bill Nichols, 'Feelings of revulsion and the limits of academic discourse', *Jump Cut*, no. 52 (2010).

8 Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Politics, Morality and the Media* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. xiii. See also Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1963).

9 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, pp. xiii–xv. Of course, western military interventions in Kosovo, Iraq and, most recently, Libya have also sought justification in humanitarian claims.

10 Ibid., p. xv.

11 Ibid., pp. 172–73. For more on how ‘effective speech [can] be an adequate response to the demand for action’, see *ibid.*, pp. 185–90.

12 Ibid., p. 177.

Looking beyond its critical and commercial fate, I attempt an assessment of *Standard Operating Procedure* in ethical, political and aesthetic terms. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, the film fails to accord fully with the established logics of what Luc Boltanski, following Hannah Arendt, calls the ‘politics of pity’.⁸ For Boltanski, the late twentieth century was marked by the increasing importance of humanitarian action and of images of distant suffering, relayed in particular by television.⁹ As the media construct and regulate relations between viewers and those whose suffering is made known only through mediation, the question arises: ‘On what conditions is the spectacle of distant suffering brought to us by the media morally acceptable?’¹⁰

Boltanski distinguishes himself from theorists of postmodernity such as Jean Baudrillard by arguing that political action taken in response to mediated suffering – and therefore reliant on a separation of representation and reality – is both possible and necessary:

when it is impossible to act directly the distant spectator must rely on the powers of effective public speech. ... He [sic] must at least make himself available as someone who will give public display to his emotion and who will pass it on in words to someone else. ... he must reasonably believe that his words are effective, that is to say, that they are capable of acting on reality and of transforming it. Now this belief itself presupposes a clear distinction between the real world in which action is deployed and the world of representation which provides the information needed about reality to guide action.¹¹

In addition, he warns that a comfortable scepticism about the medium of television conveniently dilutes its contents’ moral claims on the viewer:

One effect of the ‘crisis of confidence’ affecting the media ... is that it also relieves the anxiety, loss of self-esteem and sense of indignity which is often said to be provoked by seeing wounded, imprisoned, tortured, starving or even dead people, without being able to do anything. ...

Criticism of representation can then, if not prevail over concern about what is represented, at least encourage a suffering to be bracketed off and a doubt to be raised about its reality which, blurred by the acknowledged opacity of the medium, no longer appeals to a demand for action with the same force.¹²

Making distant and mediated suffering more than just a numbing or voyeuristic spectacle hinges, for Boltanski, on three possible strategies or ‘topics’, each of which constructs a particular relationship between spectator and sufferer. I suggest that in *Standard Operating Procedure* these conventional proposals of how the viewer should respond, ethically and politically, become ambiguous, uncertain or unconvincing. As a result, the film’s insertion of the events at Abu Ghraib into a discursive framework that might render them both legible and ‘useful’ (that is, of moral and political significance) is compromised. *Standard Operating*

- 13 Lilie Chouliaraki, 'Watching 11 September: the politics of pity', *Discourse and Society*, vol. 15, nos 2/3 (2004), p. 186.

- 14 Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 1.

- 15 Julia Lesage, 'Torture documentaries', *Jump Cut*, no. 51 (2009), <<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/TortureDocumentaries/index.html>> accessed 12 May 2011.

- 16 Devin Orgeron and Marsha Orgeron, 'Megatronic memories: Errol Morris and the politics of witnessing', in Frances Guerin and Roger Hallas (eds), *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory and Visual Culture* (London: Wallflower, 2007), p. 240.

- 17 Errol Morris, 'Lecture: The anti-post-modern post-modernist', <<http://www.errolmorris.com/content/lecture/theantipost.html>> accessed 12 May 2011.

Procedure attempts to 'moralize the spectator' and so cultivate the 'political disposition to action'¹³ explored by Boltanski, but this is only partially achieved.

Before developing this analysis further, I want to consider Morris's inquiry into the evidential status of photographs and verbal accounts of what took place at Abu Ghraib. Despite an ongoing proliferation of formats and significant epistemological challenges – resulting in what Nichols has called a shift from 'fullness and completion, knowledge and fact' towards 'incompleteness and uncertainty, recollection and impression'¹⁴ – documentary in general still retains some investment in visible evidence. This proceeds via a problematic but still powerful empiricist epistemology that privileges what is more or less accessible to the observer: the visible, the filmable. Morris acknowledges but also queries this logic by emphasizing its assumptions, exclusions and blind spots. His films typically take circuitous and indirect routes to the 'scene of the crime', which is approached via first-person testimony, archive material and reenactments. In this particular staging of documentary as a process of investigation, witnesses are typically subjected to the same kind of scrutiny as the events that they purport to narrate. This is certainly true of *Standard Operating Procedure*. Julia Lesage notes that:

[the MPs'] memories, rhetoric, and public personae are filtered through their prepared and delivered testimony at over a dozen military tribunals and at their own or others' courts martial, as well as numerous media appearances and news interviews. In the process, they probably developed a version of events that they came to believe and prefer. ... As I watch them in close-up talking to the camera, these former guards and interrogators seem sympathetic, yet I know of their terrible acts. As they speak, I search their faces for signs of remorse and any indication that they are lying or telling the truth.¹⁵

Morris is sometimes misleadingly categorized as a glib stylist with a relativist approach to truth-telling. But while his work is certainly both formally distinctive and aesthetically playful, he retains an abiding interest in scrutinizing multiple, contested and often conflicting 'truths'. He repeatedly explores his human subjects' self presentation, and how they 'narrate themselves' even via self deceptions;¹⁶ but these performances of self are not simply collected and relayed, they are arranged for viewers to assess and evaluate, with some shown to be more plausible than others. If, in most of Morris's films, the act of telling is as much the object of inquiry as the moment it claims to retrieve, that moment is never entirely dissolved into its retellings. Morris himself has stated that 'the truth is knowable, but often ... we have a vested interest in not knowing, not seeing it, disregarding it, avoiding it'.¹⁷

Standard Operating Procedure is alert to the contingency of the 'truths' on offer, but it is nonetheless a self-conscious intervention in the social

18 Howard Feinstein, 'Beyond the frame', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 18, no. 7 (2008), p. 36.

19 Orgeron and Orgeron, 'Megatronic memories', p. 240.

and political world beyond the screen. In a promotional interview, Morris says: 'To me it was a miscarriage of justice. I don't think it does our country any good to blame the little guy [the MPs] and let the big guy [President Bush] walk away. It degrades the entire concept of America.'¹⁸ Devin and Marsha Orgeron have suggested that 'Morris creates documentaries that seek out ... the many acts of remembering and retelling, and the repercussions of such acts'.¹⁹ Such repercussions may themselves depend on the veracity or otherwise of the retelling. But, much like *The Thin Blue Line*, *Standard Operating Procedure* ultimately goes one step further and proposes a new version of its central story, and thus will have consequences of its own. However, the film also grants viewers a degree of freedom to weigh the testimonies, and the visible evidence of the photographs, in order to come to their own conclusions.

Standard Operating Procedure is explicitly about the now iconic photographs from Abu Ghraib and the social, legal, military and political dimensions of the procedures that they reveal and at times constitute. The film relies upon, displays and trades in these widely circulated and recognized pictures, drawing on them for its narrative structure and visual register. But at the same time it works to reframe the photographs, interrogating their status in epistemological, juridical and human terms. It asks who took each photograph, when and why, what do they show or fail to show, how should they be interpreted? In this way, the familiarity of the images is both invoked and repudiated.

Of course a photograph is always open to (re)interpretation and (re)contextualization, its meanings never entirely clear-cut or finished. One of Morris's purposes in *Standard Operating Procedure* is to call into question what audiences think they know about Abu Ghraib from media coverage, especially the photographs, and thus to reexamine and challenge the 'already known'. What Morris calls the 'mystery of photography' is its essential ambiguity, despite an appearance of certainty and its assumed evidential authority as an indexical trace of the event photographed. (A significant element of this referential claim persists even in the digital age, despite the assumptions of many writers on the topic.²⁰) This is what gives photography the potential to mislead. In his director's commentary on the DVD of *Standard Operating Procedure*, Morris says: 'the inherent mystery of photography ... is still not solved. It remains in digital photography just as it was in analogue or chemical photography. What is it that we are looking at?'

Morris recognizes that the meaning, value and significance of photographs are not self-evident. Those from Abu Ghraib 'give us a glimpse into an unseen world but they can also serve as a cover-up'. This is compounded by the fact that, although 270 photographs were produced as evidence at various courts martial, 'the important thing is that most things are *not* photographed. They [the photographs] just give us a number of peepholes into history.' Morris continues: 'They satisfied us with the

20 For a brief riposte to arguments that overstate the crisis in indexicality caused by digital technology, see Ohad Landesman, 'In and out of this world: digital video and the aesthetics of realism in the new hybrid documentary', *Studies in Documentary Film*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2008), pp. 34–35. See also Jane M. Gaines, 'The production of outrage: the Iraq war and the radical documentary tradition', *Framework*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2007), p. 45: 'however enthusiastically we once got on the bandwagon of the "crisis of the index", we should probably now get off'.

21 Director's commentary on *Standard Operating Procedure* DVD.

idea that the people in the photographs were the real culprits ... and did not encourage us to look further, to understand what the photographs might be really about, what they might really mean, what was really going on in this place'.²¹

The film's pre-credit sequence uses extracts from an interview with civilian contract interrogator Tim Dugan, first on screen then continuing as voiceover. His dry understatement – 'I wouldn't recommend a vacation to Iraq any time soon' – runs over three consecutive photographs of a sunset, each bordered in white, positioned in the centre of the black screen. As Elfman's music builds to a crescendo of piano, bells and strings, the third photograph suddenly shrinks, receding towards the centre of the screen. Simultaneously the opening credits, starting with production company titles, then the words 'an Errol Morris film', enter screen right and move towards screen left, shrinking and fading into the black background as they do so. By now the screen has filled with tiny illuminated pictures, fading in from black and all slowly receding to a vanishing point in the centre of the screen. Then, with the arrival of the film's title graphic at screen right, a small but distinct photograph 'floats' down into the top of the screen. It is of a hooded prisoner, naked from the waist up, neck and chest smeared with what looks like blood. This too recedes into the gloom, as do other, less vivid, photographs in their turn.

What does this sequence tell viewers about the film they are about to see? First, with the startling and unexpected movement of the third sunset photograph, it foregrounds authorial control over the screened image. This breaks initial, unremarkable and habitual viewer engagement with the image (in this instance a single still photograph) and reconfigures the screen as a field crossed by multiple images, discrete and contained but in endless motion towards invisibility. The sequence was designed by Kyle Cooper, but for audiences it functions as a declaration of intent and authority on the part of Morris, under whose authorial name the film was marketed and reviewed. The abrupt shift from viewer contemplation of the screened image (which appears to invite the gaze and offer the 'best' view of itself) to awareness of another's control over it thus becomes a marker of Morris as a narrational agency, the film's 'guiding presence'.²²

Second, the sequence provides a visual metaphor for the film's propositions about the spatial and temporal limitations of photography. It figures the circumscribed and partial knowledge offered by photographs, as small and evanescent squares of illumination (in both the literal and the metaphorical sense) floating in a larger pool of darkness. In the film, Specialist Megan Ambuhl asserts: 'The pictures only show you a fraction of a second. You don't see forward and you don't see backward. You don't see outside the frame.' Morris himself has said: 'You make certain assumptions about the whole on the basis of seeing only a fraction. ... You know really nothing about the whole because you haven't seen it. It's not in the photograph. It is to all intents and purposes invisible'.²³

Standard Operating Procedure proceeds in part by making visible some of that invisible whole – context, setting, background – via a

22 Orgeron and Orgeron, 'Megatronic memories', p. 239. They are referring to Morris's authorial intrusions in his earlier film *Mr Death* (1999).

23 Feinstein, 'Beyond the frame', pp. 34–35. Eduardo Cadava makes a similar point when he writes of: 'the disappearance of context – the essential decontextualisation – that is staged by every photograph. The moment in the image appears suspended and torn from any particular historical moment – past, present, or future.' Eduardo Cadava, 'Lapsus Imaginis: the image in ruins', *October*, no. 96 (2001), p. 41.

combination of first-person testimony, reenactments and selected photographs. It is worth noting, however, that the film largely fills in the immediate, local and personal situations of the US personnel involved in the photographs. Contextualization is taken much further in the book of the same name, written by Philip Gourevitch and drawing on two hundred hours of interviews conducted by Morris, along with relevant legal documents and media investigations.²⁴ This traces, among other things, the Bush administration's deliberate evasion of the Geneva Conventions and other established rules of war.

In this way, *Standard Operating Procedure* the film puts into practice Stanley Cavell's well-known formulations about photography: that 'the camera, being finite, crops a portion from an indefinitely larger field', and that 'you can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area, beyond the frame'.²⁵ But taken together, the film and book add a political dimension to Cavell's insights, demanding that accountability be extended beyond the vilified MPs to the operation of Abu Ghraib as a military/penal institution and to the larger context provided by the ambitions, policies and practices of US foreign policy under Bush. Seen in this bigger context, the *Standard Operating Procedure* project suggests, the 'bad apples' were the fruit of a poisoned tree.

Morris's scepticism about the assumed self-sufficient evidentiality of photography informs his attempts to reframe and reinterpret the images from Abu Ghraib. He deliberately intervenes in the process whereby, as Linda Williams has put it, 'images enter into the production of knowledge'.²⁶ Clearly the photographs are important because they record events that took place in Abu Ghraib. To this extent they are held as genuine and unfaked registrations of particular occurrences by military investigations, by the news media and by Morris. As Lesage notes, 'The Abu Ghraib photos, almost instantaneously after their appearance on CBS and publication in *The New Yorker*, opened up a whole new historiographic space. They made history and they've shaped a history yet to come'.²⁷ Judith Butler suggests that 'the indefinite circulability of the [photographic] image allows the event to continue to happen, and, indeed, thanks to these images, the event has not stopped happening'.²⁸ By contrast, there are no photographs that might anchor reports of torture at Guantanamo Bay or British detention camps in Iraq. In *Standard Operating Procedure* photographs do indeed function in part as visible evidence, as traces of events that have happened. But the film holds well back from a simple positivist empiricism, querying the photographs' epistemological status even as it deploys them.

Standard Operating Procedure's reframings may not say exactly what the photographs mean, and do not aspire to offer a 'complete' truth. Instead they remind audiences that not only these particular photographs but all visible evidence, and all witness accounts, are inevitably contingent, partial and selective, and should always be open to scrutiny. To this end, photographs are sometimes used in the film to undercut or challenge statements made in interview, while at other moments interview

24 Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure: a War Story* (London: Picador, 2008).

25 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 24, 23.

26 Linda Williams, 'Mirrors without memories: truth, history and the new documentary', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 3 (1993), p. 11.

27 Lesage, 'Torture documentaries'.

28 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 86.

testimony clarifies or complicates what the still images appear to show. In other words, there is no consistent epistemological hierarchy governing the two sets of sources.

The assembly of photographs into sequences sometimes enables Morris to comment indirectly on his interviewees' accounts. For instance, one chain of photographs is screened, with musical accompaniment, immediately after Megan Ambuhl has described the routine abuse and humiliation of (male) prisoners: 'point at him and laugh at him when he was in the shower naked ... burn him with a cigarette ... we just do what they [Military Intelligence or other government agencies] want us to do'. Morris can be heard asking from offscreen space, 'Did any of this seem weird?', to which she replies, 'Not when you take into account that we were being told that that's helping to save lives'. After this interview extract, a montage of eighteen photographs is shown. Displayed consecutively, each is framed in white against a black screen in a sequence lasting just under a minute. The series depicts scenes of everyday life for MPs in Abu Ghraib: dozing on a chair, posing for the camera with thumbs up or by imitating sex acts with a banana. These are the micro-events of a daily routine that happens to include torture and abuse – themselves perhaps no more remarkable after a time than brushing your teeth. The sequence ends with three photographs of a hooded prisoner handcuffed to metal bars. Their location as the last images in the series implies both continuity with, and difference from, those that preceded them. This is underlined by a distinct musical note sounding at each cut to a new image of the prisoner. Similar notes are audible earlier on, but they now emerge from the ensemble of instruments to sound clear and isolated, linked to the larger, musical movement but also differentiated from it, much like the three photographs' relation to the whole montage.

The clear implication from the conjunction of sequential still images and musical score is that the abuse and torture of these prisoners, while perhaps unremarkable in the context of daily activities in Abu Ghraib, is to be understood by viewers of the film as egregious. Thus the justifications rehearsed by Ambuhl and others, while indicative of the daily pressures and institutionalized procedures under which the MPs were working, are presented as insufficient and not to be taken as reasonable grounds for what occurred. Much of the film's interview footage is not commented upon, even implicitly, but is left to be believed or disbelieved, judged or accepted, according to the dispositions of viewers. But at rare moments like that discussed here, *Standard Operating Procedure* opens up a space for a contrary perspective, not via the explicit commentary of voiceover, but via the arrangement of archival images.

Since the critical and commercial success of *The Thin Blue Line*, Morris's style has been seen by some as 'too cinematic' for a documentarian.²⁹ That film's reenactments in particular have often been taken as an ironic visual commentary on the testimony that they illustrate.³⁰ Part of the impact of

29 Orgeron and Orgeron, 'Megatronic memories', p. 250.

30 See Bill Nichols, 'Documentary reenactment and the fantasmatic subject', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2008), p. 86: 'a perfectly lit container of malted milkshake tumbles through the night air in slow motion as if to blatantly overdramatize one subject's account'.

31 Morris's 'excessive' style is distinct from several other modes of reenactment. See Jonathan Kahana, 'Introduction: what now? Presenting reenactment', *Framework*, vol. 50, nos 1/2 (2009), pp. 46–60.

32 Samuel Wigley, 'Standard Operating Procedure', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 18, no. 8 (2008), p. 78.

33 Feinstein, 'Beyond the frame', p. 34.

The Thin Blue Line comes from its stylistic 'excess' and an apparent mismatch with content (the murder of a police officer) that in 1988 did not usually receive such treatment but seemed to demand a more 'sober' and conventional documentary style.³¹ By the time of *Standard Operating Procedure*, this 'cinematic' stylization had become something of a cliché, one more set of devices which documentary could deploy. Very little irony is produced in the film's reenactments, which risk becoming hollow and portentous or simply sensationalist. Yet on occasions Morris uses reenactment to produce a viewer affect that is none of these things, as I will demonstrate below.

Many of the reenactments are shot in ultra-slow motion at 1000 frames per second, using a Phantom V9 camera that Morris first used to film commercials for a poker website. They also repeatedly deploy top lighting, canted framing and exaggerated closeups. The foregrounded, 'excessive', or for some 'gothic',³² style of the reenactments is a means of animating and illustrating interviewees' testimony, partly in order to 'take the viewer into the nightmare of Abu Ghraib', according to Morris, while simultaneously stressing these representations' status *as* representations. They bring audiences inside an Abu Ghraib fabricated on a sound stage, and close to the bodies of stand-ins cast as prisoners and their guards.

Morris prides himself on avoiding any gesture towards an observational aesthetic:

People used to think that the truth should be shot badly. The truth is not guaranteed by natural lighting or a handheld camera. ... I wanted [cinematographer Robert] Richardson to do the re-enactments so they would look unmistakably different from everything else [in the film], so there could be no question whether or not they were created by me.³³

This selfconscious artifice contributes to a distancing effect, even while the action unfolds in the 'present tense' of conventional realist film style. In stressing the filmic mediation of the referent, and asserting the constructedness of the reenactments, Morris situates this footage at several removes from the originary moment – recalled at a later time, and spoken into existence via talk which is itself produced under the particular conditions of a filmed interview.

The problem of the reenactments not being 'real enough' is anticipated and mitigated through 'excessive' film form, which acknowledges their reenactedness. Equally, an attempt to manage the converse problem of being 'too real' is made via their content, which usually focuses *near* moments of violence and torture but not directly *on* them, staying peripheral in spatial and/or temporal terms. For instance, ultra-slow motion sequences show a drop of blood falling from the face of the prisoner Manadel al-Jamadi onto a uniform, a hand taking a key from a hook and turning it in a lock, and another peeling dressings from al-Jamadi's corpse, but the violent interrogation that killed him is not restaged. Thus the reenactments in *Standard Operating Procedure* hover between display and concealment.

34 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, p. 119.

The reenactments are aligned with what Boltanski calls the ‘aesthetic topic’, whereby the spectator of suffering remains conscious of the act of looking and “‘watches himself [sic] seeing’”.³⁴ In his overview of the history of European aesthetics, which traces a shift from beauty as an inherent property of objects towards the aesthetic gaze of an elevated and discerning subject, Boltanski summarizes:

Inclusion of the horrible and the ugly, of the sublime and then the picturesque, and finally at the start of the nineteenth century, especially in Goya, of the grotesque, considerably extends the list of objects capable of being apprehended as they would be by a painter and thereby opens up an almost unlimited domain to the aesthetic.³⁵

35 Ibid., p. 123.

In the case of *Standard Operating Procedure*, despite the deliberate withholding of a frontal gaze at the violence inside Abu Ghraib, this field of the aestheticized has become even further extended.

It is not that documentary aesthetics should *always* avoid the kind of stylistic innovation that Morris has popularized, nor that the conservative orthodoxy of observationalism – of which he is rightly suspicious – should be doggedly adhered to as some kind of formal guarantor of ‘truth’. However, *Standard Operating Procedure* is something of a limit case, the particular content of which renders such an overtly aestheticized form problematic. The asymmetry between an expensively staged and shot form and a content made up of acts of degradation and violence becomes unjustifiable for viewers (including this author) who are not comfortable watching such material with an aesthetic gaze.³⁶

36 See also Nichols, ‘Feelings of revulsion’; Arthur, ‘The horror’.

Boltanski locates another essential asymmetry in the aesthetic topic, which pertains in the relations between spectator and sufferer:

What the spectator may say about the unfortunate is not intended for him [sic]. ... Thus he does not have to adapt his words so as to allow room for the possibility of the unfortunate taking them up himself or at least of a dialogue (for example, by censoring what, from the unfortunate’s point of view, might be judged contrary to his dignity and consequently unacceptable).³⁷

37 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, p. 132.

Indeed, although *Standard Operating Procedure* invites the ‘bad apples’ to talk back to their media representations, and implicitly accords viewers the capacity to reconsider some of their initial assumptions, at no point does the film propose, or even contemplate, dialogue with its objectified Iraqi subjects.

While less fully realized, elements of the other two topics or strategies theorized by Boltanski (‘sentiment’ and ‘denunciation’) are also present in *Standard Operating Procedure*, and may also prove uncomfortable or unconvincing for viewers. I will move towards the first of these topics via a consideration of another relatively rare moment of (implicit) moral commentary which, perhaps surprisingly, emerges from the particularities of a reenacted scene. The sequence depicts the mock electrocution of a man known to MPs as ‘Gilligan’ (because of his resemblance to the

38 Gourevitch and Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure*, p. 100. See Morris's blog on problems in establishing the real identity of 'Gilligan', whom Morris names in the blog (but not the film) as Abdou Hussain Saad Faleh. "Will the real hooded man please stand up?"; *New York Times*, The Opinion Pages, 15 August 2007, <<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/15/will-the-real-hooded-man-please-stand-up>> accessed 12 May 2011.

39 *Standard Operating Procedure* DVD director's commentary. This particular photograph was taken by Staff Sergeant Ivan Frederick. Other views of the same pose were taken by Sabrina Harman and Charles Graner.

protagonist of the US sitcom *Gilligan's Island*),³⁸ who was hooded, made to stand on a cardboard box in a shower stall with wires around his fingers, and told that if he fell he would be electrocuted. The reenactment is immediately preceded by Specialist Sabrina Harman talking on screen: "'Gilligan' was the one on the box with the wires. He was accused of killing two CID agents.' Slow, sonorous music (strings playing in a minor key) starts to build, and there is a cut to a staged shot of a cardboard box, upright on the floor, with wires nearby. Then there is a cut to a photograph of 'Gilligan', wearing a blanket and a sandbag hood pushed up from his face, carrying the cardboard box as if to his own Calvary.

Harman continues in voiceover: 'it was his box, he had to hold it, he had to stand on it ... he was never physically ever touched that I saw, he was just very, very tired'. As the music continues to swell there is a cut to a closeup of bare feet standing on top of the box, then a closeup of fingertips, in chiaroscuro lighting, with a thin metal wire just visible around one finger. As the image fades to black, the whorls of 'Gilligan's fingerprints become briefly visible. At this moment, the ineradicable humanity of 'Gilligan' as a unique individual with a particular history, identity and subjectivity also comes briefly into focus. The realization is loaded with an emotional charge and cued via the accretion of corporeal details, overlaid by Elfman's orchestral score.

Of course, these are not the fingertips of 'Gilligan' after all, but those of a stand-in whose body is a substitute for his. 'Gilligan's own body is absent, occupying a different time and space, and never available for Morris's camera. The nearest that viewers can get to it is via the mediation of photographs taken by his captors, including what Morris calls 'probably the most infamous picture in the history of photography':³⁹ 'Gilligan' standing on the box, hooded, with his arms stretched out in a Christ-like pose.

'Gilligan's body is doubled by an anonymous individual, whose identity and humanity is of no real interest to the film's argument or audiences but who is used to make a point about these as crucial attributes of another ('Gilligan'). The reenactment provides 'better' access to the substitute body, via a profilmic event that is staged for this purpose. Yet its use value, even as stand-in, is to remind *Standard Operating Procedure's* audiences of the absent body, to supplement the photographic registration of 'Gilligan' (which was itself staged for the three different still cameras used by the MPs that night) with filmed access to bodily details that are arranged after the event but which remain highly effective. Thus it is in the conjunction of two sets of mediations – the staged photographs of the real 'Gilligan', and the staged reenactments with his substitute – that the sequence achieves its impact.

The response produced can be further elaborated via Boltanski's 'topic of sentiment', whereby the spectator is moved to pity or gratitude by the suffering of a fellow human being:

40 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, pp. 91–92.

Tender-heartedness is the sympathetic emotion par excellence, a ‘gentle emotion’ which tends to be contrasted to the *indignation* aroused at the sight of injustice both being different responses to the spectacle of ‘human miseries’. As ‘the imagination of the heart’, tender-heartedness consists in ‘feeling oneself in one’s fellow man’ [sic], in recognising in a gesture of ‘humanity’ ‘the common interest’ which links the one it touches to others.⁴⁰

Yet the inspiration of sentiment in the spectator of *Standard Operating Procedure* is complicated by two things. First, its fleeting presence in a sequence which simultaneously objectifies and spectacularizes the victim (‘Gilligan’). Second, the lack, in this particular scene and in the scandal of Abu Ghraib as a whole, of a ‘benefactor’, one whose gesture of help reiterates the notion of a shared humanity, one who will act on the victim’s behalf, so inspiring gratitude on the part of both the sufferer and the spectator.

Standard Operating Procedure never grants interiority to the Iraqi victims and has little room for their perspectives. To this extent, something of their objectification and loss of agency in Abu Ghraib persists in the film’s use of archive photos, reenactments, and interviews with US personnel only. As I have demonstrated, on occasion the use of reenactments (and at other times still photographs), supplemented by Elfman’s score, invites audiences to sympathize with the prisoners via an insistence on their humanity. Yet the film’s inability to give them voice or subjectivity at these moments simply offers its viewers what Patricia Zimmermann has called ‘stagnant empathy’.⁴¹

The recognition of a shared, fragile humanity cannot guarantee a different treatment of those victimized in acts of violence and injustice; nor does it necessarily result in a more progressive depiction of them. Nevertheless, the mutual acknowledgement of common humanity even in difference, while insufficient in itself, can be a step towards both ethical action and more collaborative and empowering forms of documentary.

In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler notes the double significance of the notion of humanness. It functions as a coercive norm, a shifting and selectively allocated entitlement that defines itself against those it excludes as less than human. But it is also a necessary term for affirming the rights to life of those who are themselves oppressed by the forcible operation of this norm:

Some humans take their humanness for granted, while others struggle to gain access to it. ... I would suggest that this norm [of the human] is not something that we must seek to embody, but a differential of power that we must learn to read, to assess culturally and politically, and to oppose in its differential operations. And yet, we also need the term, in order to assert it precisely where it cannot be asserted, and to do this in the name of opposing the differential of power by which it operates, as a way of working against the forces of neutralization or erasure that

41 Patricia R. Zimmermann, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 62.

42 Butler, *Frames of War*, pp. 76–77.

43 Ibid., p. 74.

44 Ibid., p. 85; see also pp. 124–35 for Butler's critique of the notion of a 'civilizing mission'.

45 Ibid., p. 90.

46 Ibid., p. 93.

47 Carsten Bagge Laustsen, 'The camera as a weapon: on Abu Ghraib and related matters', *Journal for Cultural Research*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2008), p. 130.

48 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 27, 28.

49 Ibid., p. 27.

50 Laustsen also notes the effective 'feminization' of male prisoners via torture and sexual humiliation. Laustsen, 'The camera as a weapon', p. 131. See also Zillah Eisenstein, 'Sexual humiliation, gender confusion and the horrors at Abu Ghraib', 22 June 2004, <<http://www.zcommunications.org/sexual-humiliation-gender-confusion-and-the-horrors-at-abu-ghraib-by-zillah-eisenstein>> accessed 12 May 2011.

51 Laustsen, 'The camera as a weapon', p. 129. See also Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 89.

52 One might ask the same question of academic commentary on Abu Ghraib, which is not automatically immune to this accusation.

53 On the risk of 'intensifying the "exposure" of the victim', see also Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 95.

separate us from knowing and responding to the suffering that is caused, sometimes in our names.⁴²

For Butler, such norms govern 'which human lives count as human and as living [and hence grievable when lost], and which do not'.⁴³ The acts of torture at Abu Ghraib make manifest this distinction. Moreover, even when labeled as war crimes they 'amount[ed] to an enactment of the very norms that serve[d] to legitimate the war', norms which were predicated on racializing and civilizational logics.⁴⁴

It is widely recognized that the anonymization and dehumanization of prisoners facilitates acts of abuse and torture that further seek, in Butler's phrase, 'to decimate personhood'.⁴⁵ Denied the protection afforded by the Geneva Conventions, the prisoners' 'status as less than human is not only presupposed by the torture, but reinstituted by it'.⁴⁶ In Abu Ghraib prisoners were rendered anonymous by being forced to wear jumpsuits, sandbag hoods and women's underwear over their heads, and by the arrangement of their bodies into stacks or pyramids, effectively eroding or obliterating marks of individuality and humanity and thus evading the ethical obligations of a face-to-face encounter.

In a discussion of the still camera as an instrument of torture at Abu Ghraib, Carsten Bagge Laustsen writes:

The denial of a shared humanity, the killing of the other as a human person, is a prominent feature in all the photographs. The victim is not seen as a person with a face and a history. ... The use of sandbags [for hoods] might serve to disorientate the prisoners, but it might also be seen as way of reducing prisoners to bodies, which makes it possible for the perpetrators to ignore the pleas for mercy that every haunted face displays.⁴⁷

The dehumanizing abuses practised in Abu Ghraib were reiterated by the symbolic violence of taking and circulating photographic images of these acts. As Elaine Scarry has suggested, torture converts pain and the vision of suffering into a 'spectacle of power', a 'grotesque piece of compensatory drama'.⁴⁸ She writes: 'What assists the conversion of absolute pain into the fiction of absolute power is an obsessive, self-conscious display of agency'.⁴⁹ The photographing of the abuse, which used the 'camera as a weapon', in Laustsen's phrase, was just such an assertion of agency.⁵⁰ He notes that: 'Shame is a social emotion caused by the anticipation of other people's views. ... These photographs increase the number of possible witnesses and, as such, they add to the shame felt by the victim'.⁵¹ Does *Standard Operating Procedure*, then, at some level multiply the shame of the victims, like any other recycling of the photographs?⁵² Is this a price worth paying to investigate the scandal, the scapegoating of MPs, and the culpability of the Bush administration?⁵³

For all its evident abhorrence of what happened at Abu Ghraib, the film does little to counter the objectification of the victims. Indeed, while *Standard Operating Procedure* manifests outrage and concern at the

plight of the prisoners, it reproduces and repeats their de-individuation into nameless, voiceless objects. As discussed above, the ‘Gilligan’ reenactment invites viewers to recognize the humanity of this hooded man at the iconic moment of his humiliation. Yet even when audiences are brought close to the victim, as in this sequence, the perspective offered to them is that of the sympathetic but ultimately distanced voyeur or, at best, juror, always outside looking on and in.

In a way, this is as it should be. Although Morris asks viewers to think about the abuse, the photographs and the ensuing scandal, he cannot, and does not really try to, put them into the bodies of the prisoners. *Standard Operating Procedure* in effect remains a reminder of the alterity of the viewed other, even while asking for (some) empathy with, and sympathy towards, him. To do any differently may smack of wishful thinking and fantasies of virtual connection. As Roger Silverstone has suggested: ‘Proper distance preserves the other through difference as well as through shared identity’.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it remains the case that the film renders this alterity more or less irreducible by depriving the prisoners of speech, agency and much of their identity.

The MPs individuated some of their prisoners in a rudimentary way with nicknames, which were manifestations of power as well as partial and highly reductive recognitions of humanity. (Later, those in a more privileged position named the MPs themselves ‘bad apples’, reducing their various identities to this single collective term.) Apart from ‘Gilligan’ and ‘Bernie’ (the man killed during interrogation and later smuggled out of the prison on a stretcher), the victims in *Standard Operating Procedure* remain nameless and largely anonymous.⁵⁵ They are thus to some degree ‘all the same’, as racialized others are often thought to be, knowable only by the shared characteristics of being Iraqi men in Abu Ghraib. They are also, crucially and concomitantly, voiceless. In a film so dependent on speech, and constructed to a significant degree from footage of ‘talking heads’, the victims of Abu Ghraib remain silent. To this extent, the hooding of the prisoners (with, as W. J. T. Mitchell notes, the hood functioning as both gag and blindfold⁵⁶) is reproduced symbolically within *Standard Operating Procedure* itself.

The film is not so imperialist as to presume to speak for the victims of Abu Ghraib, nor does it give them a voice and listen to what they might say. Between these two poles the prisoners remain silent, neither speaking nor spoken for. As such they appear as a largely undifferentiated mass – anonymous, objectified, homogeneous. They are not even granted the status that Morris accords the demonized subjects of his so-called ‘pariah trilogy’. Of these films (*Mr Death* [1999], *The Fog of War* and *Standard Operating Procedure*) Morris says, ‘I think there’s something terribly important about extending sympathy where it has never been extended before’.⁵⁷ But in *Standard Operating Procedure* the individuated, partially recuperated agents are Americans like Sabrina Harman and Lynndie England, not ‘Bernie’, ‘Gilligan’ or their nameless fellow prisoners.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Roger Silverstone, *Media and Morality: on the Rise of the Mediapolis* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 47. See also Keith Tester, ‘Reflections on the Abu Ghraib photographs’, *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2005), p. 143: ‘It is distasteful to see the comfortable equating their own hurts with those of the absolutely humiliated’.

⁵⁵ ‘Bernie’ referred to *Weekend at Bernie’s*, a Hollywood comedy where the protagonists pretend that their dead boss is still alive. Morris, ‘The most curious thing’.

⁵⁶ W. J. T. Mitchell, ‘The unspeakable and the unimaginable: word and image in a time of terror’, *ELH: English Literary History*, vol. 72, no. 22 (2005), p. 297.

⁵⁷ Morris quoted in David Lamble, ‘A lesbian MP among the “bad apples”’, *Bay Area Reporter*, 15 May 2008, <http://www.ebar.com/arts/art_article.php?sec=film&article=501> accessed 12 May 2011.

⁵⁸ Harman is the film’s star witness. In addition to being interviewed on camera, she is recorded reading out letters that she sent from Iraq to her partner, which provide an expressive voiceover at key moments.

59 Mitchell, 'The unspeakable and the unimaginable', pp. 294–95. On torture's distortion and attempted annihilation of the capacity for speech, and on the symbolic consequences of its restoration, see Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, pp. 49–50.

60 Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, p. 57.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

62 See *ibid.*, p. 61.

63 Charles Graner, the MP who staged the human pyramids, is central to the photographic record but was serving a ten-year prison sentence when *Standard Operating Procedure* was being made, and Morris was refused permission to interview him.

Mitchell writes: “We have ways of making you talk” is the mantra of the torturer, but those ways tend finally to produce nothing but an echo of the interrogator’s question and, finally, the silence of the body reduced to inarticulate animal cries of pain’.⁵⁹ Ultimately *Standard Operating Procedure* perpetuates this silence, even as it stimulates talk and debate around the actions of the torturers.

I want to return one last time to Boltanski, in order to consider *Standard Operating Procedure*’s handling of recrimination and accusation in the light of the Abu Ghraib scandal. Boltanski writes: ‘Faced with the spectacle of an unfortunate suffering far away, what can a morally receptive spectator do when he [sic] is condemned, at least for the moment, to inaction? He [sic] can become *indignant*’.⁶⁰ According to the ‘topic of denunciation’, the indignant spectator who is unable to intervene directly will instead make an accusation against the perceived persecutor who has caused the suffering of the victim.

The most obvious persecutors against whom accusations were made are of course the ‘bad apples’, the MPs convicted of multiple crimes in the wake of the scandal. In the process, the Bush administration, the US army and, by extension, US society asserted their own innocence by affirming the culpability of the MPs. Boltanski writes of such scapegoating: ‘The group reinforces its cohesion by exalting the morality of its members and by accusing others of immorality and imputing to them the very acts they themselves commit’.⁶¹ The Bush government could be seen trying to do this, to retain a sense of moral purpose claimed as justification for the invasion of Iraq, even in the face of revelations of abuse and torture. Morris’s film (and book) refute this simple scapegoating but can never convincingly invert the positions,⁶² such that those accused of persecution (the ‘bad apples’) become simply victims or sufferers. In other words, the recuperation can only ever be incomplete.

Standard Operating Procedure thereby denies the viewer the satisfaction of an accusation as straightforward as that offered by President Bush, the military and much of the US media. The film blames Bush and his cohorts as ultimate instigators of the legitimization of torture by US personnel. But this is by implication only, amplified by Morris’s gloss on the film in promotional interviews. The situation is unsatisfying because these high-level persecutors remain inaccessible and scarcely figure in the film⁶³ – a very brief photo sequence shows US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld on a flying visit to Abu Ghraib following the occupation of Baghdad.

Very late on in the film, Special Agent Brent Pack of the US Army Criminal Investigative Division, the man tasked with locating incriminating pictures of prisoner abuse from twelve compact discs of digital photographs, explains which images reveal criminal acts (such as physical injury, sexually humiliating positions, forced masturbation) and which do not. The latter list includes enforced nudity, prisoners being

⁶⁴ The longer list provided in the book of *Standard Operating Procedure* includes 'Palestinian hangings' (prisoners shackled with all their body weight on their arms). Gourevitch and Morris, *Standard Operating Procedure*, pp. 266–67.

⁶⁵ Thanks to Steve Jones on this point.

⁶⁶ Williams, 'Mirrors without memories', p. 20.

made to wear women's knickers on their heads, and the 'Gilligan' case.⁶⁴ Pack declares these actions to be 'no more than sleep deprivation ... [inmates] going through discomfort to try to aid in obtaining information'. Hence they are not instances of torture but just 'standard operating procedure', giving the film its title. The point is reiterated with footage of the terms 'criminal act' and 'SOP' being stamped in red on a series of photographs. Pack's distinction provides a key narrative and argumentative twist in *Standard Operating Procedure*, coming as it does at the end of a gradual intensification of the acts of abuse and torture recounted in the film.⁶⁵ At this crucial point, the US military becomes subject to (implicit) denunciation as the persecutor of the inmates because its retrospective judgment, as personified by Pack, allows some of the abuses to pass as legal and acceptable. Nevertheless, the denunciation is of an institution whose leaders, both political and military, are never challenged directly and who remain beyond the reach of the film.

Linda Williams has written that 'some form of truth is the always receding goal of documentary. But the truth figured by documentary cannot be a simple unmasking or reflection. It is a careful construction, an intervention in the politics and the semiotics of representation.'⁶⁶ I have argued here that *Standard Operating Procedure* is just such a knowing intervention in the making and remaking of meaning. The film refuses to take for granted familiar interpretations of the Abu Ghraib photographs, and in doing so challenges some of the dominant assumptions and understandings that shaped the resulting scandal. While allowing the 'bad apples' to give their own testimony, *Standard Operating Procedure* remains alert to contradictions and self-justifications in their accounts, and refrains from proposing a simple straightforward truth of 'what really happened'. But it is also illustrative of some of the ethical and political problems that attend mediations of distant suffering. Its achievements are ultimately limited, not only by its particular organization of aesthetics, sentiment and denunciation, but also by the fact that in listening to and (partially) reframing the torturers it leaves their victims in continuing silence. Such omissions and contradictions make the film a less successful intervention in the politics of pity than viewers opposed to Bush's adventurism in Iraq might have wished for.

I would like to thank David Deacon for inviting me to give a paper on this topic at the University of Loughborough, and members of the audience, whose questions helped me refine my argument.

Queer art of parallaxed document: the visual discourse of docudrag in Kutluğ Ataman's *Never My Soul!*

CÜNEYT ÇAKIRLAR

Through the performative storytelling of Ceyhan Firat Hizal, a Turkish preoperative transsexual living in Lausanne, Switzerland, Kutluğ Ataman's *Never My Soul!* translates to video-art practice the critical potentials of mockumentary-making and its pseudo-ontological relation to drag performativity. Queering genres of visual identification, *Never My Soul!* (2001) documents Ceyhan's self-performance *in drag*, where the drag act, autobiographical revelations, testimony and self-confession are both supplemented by and confused with a strategically rewritten script of so-called 'original' conversations. As the artist claims, the text, as well as the character performing and busily constructing herself in front of the camera, operates as a travesty: 'a transvestite itself'.¹ Oscillating between melodrama, porn and confessional documentary realism, and mocking their generic truth claims, Ataman's video is a hybrid of multilayered artifice and excess.

In an entirely different context, Marcos Becquer and Alisa Lebow, following Peggy Phelan, critique the disembodied ethnographic gaze on Harlem drag balls in Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning* (1991). Their discussion attempts to imagine 'a filmic "match"' in documentary practice between form and content; a filmic enactment of the transgendered subjects' epistemological challenge, in which the visual narrative *becomes* what it intends to realize and portray.² The scholars suggest a queer mode of documenting queer culture: 'a docudrag – a fiction in documentary clothing; a documentary about drag ... [which] imitates the

1 'De-regulation: Kutluğ Ataman and Irit Rogoff in conversation', video download from *De-Regulation with the Work of Kutluğ Ataman*, <<http://www.de-regulation.org/node>> accessed 20 June 2011.

2 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 103. In her reading of *Paris Is Burning*, Phelan suggests that 'Livingston's film does not enact the radical epistemology of her subjects – it sticks too close to the rules of ethnographic documentary to experiment with criss-crossing filmic identities' (ibid.).

3 Marcos Becquer and Alisa Lebow, 'Docudrag, or "realness" as a documentary strategy: Felix Rodriguez's *One Moment in Time* (1992)', in Chon A. Noriega and Ana M. Lopez (eds), *Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 145–49.

4 Ibid., p. 155.

5 Rune Gade, 'Talk & show – Kutluğ Ataman and oral visibility', in Laura Hoptman, *Kutluğ Ataman – Long Streams* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 2003), p. 6.

6 Irit Rogoff, 'De-regulation: with the work of Kutluğ Ataman', *Third Text*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2009), p. 167.

7 Mark Nash, 'Kutluğ Ataman's experiments with truth', in *Kutluğ Ataman: Perfect Strangers*, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), p. 44.

8 Rachel Kent, '"Reality at the service of fiction": the film art of Kutluğ Ataman', in *Kutluğ Ataman: Perfect Strangers*, p. 8.

codes of the filmic practice that purports to best imitate reality itself, documentary ... in treat[ing] an already imitative practice, drag'.³ My aim here is to capitalize upon this critical urge to define 'docudrag [as] the transmutation and implication of a gender challenge into a documentary challenge' and to borrow Becquer and Lebow's focus on the intersections between gender- and genre-mimesis in documentary-making.⁴ My proposal is that within its formalist concerns and its aesthetic enjoyment of an identity/identification trouble, *Never My Soul!* operates as docudrag.

What is at work dramatically in Ataman's artworks is a performative documentary mode of 'oral visibility',⁵ long streams of talking heads, a narrative mode beyond identity or identification; as Irit Rogoff writes, 'long streams of language that flood over you, a Scheherazade-like experience of being seduced by eccentric and extravagant narratives that get more and more detailed, more and more complex as they unfold, following their own weird lines of stream-of-consciousness logic'.⁶ 'Duration', Mark Nash suggests, is 'a key strategy' in Ataman's projects: 'the length of the piece means that the viewer is both immersed in and overwhelmed by, indeed loses control of, the material they are being presented with'.⁷ Although my discussion will foreground *Never My Soul!* and the possible queer valencies in interpreting its videographic narrative, it might be possible to consider the artist's entire body of work as a queer project.

Shortlisted for the Turner Prize and awarded the prestigious international Carnegie Prize in 2004 with his forty-screen video installation *Kuba* (2004), Ataman has become an extremely well-known, 'globally' acclaimed artist and filmmaker. His work thus offers resonances that encompass Euro-American contemporary art scenes. His screen-based multi-channel video installations 'explore the role of film as a medium through which reality and fiction collide',⁸ and where his ethnographic sensitivity vis-a-vis the subject of (re-)presentation incorporates a politically selfconscious distance, both intimate and impersonal. The artist attempts to confront the viewer with the machinery of truth-making and self-invention. Ataman's project, in a nutshell, is to document, through catalysis, the constitutive performative excess within which the subject constantly fictionalizes, realizes and undoes her/his own self. What the artist enacts is a deliberate, conscientious failure in generic representation.

The eight-hour performance of the eighty-seven-year-old Turkish operatic diva Semiha Berksoy in *semiha b. unplugged* (1997) and the testimonies of four Turkish women, each with radically different reasons for wearing wigs, in *Women Who Wear Wigs* (1999) are early examples of Ataman's videographic discourse of portraiture-via-talk. The content of the four adjacent screens in *Women*, as an allegorized community of women, relates to and deconstructs itself in terms of Turkey's republican, secularist and/or modernist ideals as a nation-state. While the spectator is exposed to an allegory of the history of Turkey's modernization in the playful performance of the famous diva in *semiha*, the oral-visual

cacophony of the four Turkish women in *Women* makes that allegory not only embody a queer supplement but also allude to a messily gendered history. In *1 + 1 = 1* (2002), the testimony of Neşe Yasin, a Turkish-Cypriot woman, reveals her divided self and memories from her post-1974 'present'. Screening this on two hinged screens facing each other accentuates the effect of the doubled image, as does the double voice of Yasin's simultaneous telling of her geographically fractured life stories. The long-stream interview with a British horticulturalist passionate about Amaryllis bulbs in *Four Seasons of Veronica Read* (2002) and the conversation with a German moth-collector in *Stefan's Room* (2005) demonstrate the artist's aesthetic interest in portraying eccentric selves beyond identity/identification. Through portraying the perverse obsessions of his characters Veronica and Stefan, Ataman presents their ascetic art of life. In these pieces Ataman prioritizes the enactment of his conceptual, critical and aesthetic agenda rather than the elaboration, through documenting or indexing, of a geographic or national referent.

Incorporating different narrative and curatorial strategies of genre-bending, Ataman's artworks position the spectator within a problematic arena where documentary realism *as genre* and ethnography *as method* are being constantly queered via both subjects' and artist's performative manipulations. Nash argues that Ataman's method 'engage[s] in contesting and queering dominant narratives of globalization and in particular the art world's fascination with difference mediated through documentary'.⁹ Considering the social, cultural and geographic diversity that Ataman covers in his work, the artist's aesthetic enactment of, and queer play with, difference cannot be considered simply as investigating contemporary Turkey from within. However, what I would like to analyze here, through *Never My Soul!* in particular, are the possible ways in which 'queer' as an authorial discourse in Ataman's practice escapes and travels back into the Turkish context. I wish to imply both the burdens and the advantages of the artist's queer(able) methodology and its national indexicality.

Reading the institutional reception of Ataman through the globalizing political economies of travel in the contemporary visual arts scene, Lebow considers the artist's success as an effect of 'the twin phenomena of the globalized art world's embrace of a non-Western artist and its simultaneous embrace of documentary'.¹⁰ Referring to the spectatorial experience of video aesthetics within the cacophony of *Women Who Wear Wigs*, subtitled in English, and the artist's reluctance to exhibit *Kuba* in Turkey, Lebow implies that Ataman's primary emphasis on the artistic rigour of his artworks causes their political potential to be flattened and devalued by the global art market; the scholar asks *for whom* these works are made.¹¹ Interestingly, the retrospective curated by Rogoff, *De-Regulation with the Work of Kutluğ Ataman* (2006–07), seems to suggest a counter-argument to Lebow's by positioning the artist's body of work as deregulating the flattening gaze of the global and its hegemony over the local. Rogoff's curatorial agenda emphasizes that the

9 Nash, 'Kutluğ Ataman's experiments with truth', p. 47.

10 Alisa Lebow, 'Worldwide wigs: Kutluğ Ataman and the global art documentary', *Arab Studies Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2/vol. 16, no. 1 (2008), p. 58.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

12 Rogoff, 'De-regulation', pp. 165–66.

13 'De-regulation: Kutluğ Ataman and Irit Rogoff in conversation'.

14 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: the Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 203.

15 Ibid., p. 180.

retrospective *De-Regulation* 'aims to introduce a particular location, Turkey, without turning it into a context that didactically explains everything about the work'.¹² Rogoff puts a critical emphasis on 'tak[ing] away the link between place and identity' and assumes that the discourse of Ataman's work reveals a resonance with what she positions against the 'anachronisms of conventional geography'. In her interview with the artist for the exhibition of *De-Regulation* in Israel, Rogoff asks:

How do we make a move in an exhibition that doesn't allow people to do that [i.e. the identification of/with a Turkish sociohistorical context] automatically? How do we create a kind of break in the natural assumption that if somebody happens to come from Turkey and happens to be interviewing a lot of Turkish subjects in the Turkish language then automatically this is about Turkey and it will tell you an awful lot about Turkey? I want to ask ... how we can agitate this, how we can make this uncomfortable ... this endless desire to identify someone by nationality, by geographical location and so on? How do we not allow this to happen?¹³

I shall incorporate and advocate within my analysis of *Never My Soul!* both the critical references to the contemporary Turkish context and the crosscultural articulations that the very skin of the video triggers, considering the ways in which the critical potentials of the artwork might operate both within and beyond its national referent. I wish to suggest an analytical framework that constructs a reciprocal non-hierarchical relation between the artwork's local and global modes of intelligibility, and thus avoids any automatic mode of engagement with Ataman's work by means of an essentializing, localizing reiteration of his artistic persona.

Ataman's critical engagement with representation resonates with what Hal Foster advocates as 'parallactic work that attempts to frame the framer as he or she frames the other'.¹⁴ Taking the contemporary performative of 'artist-as-ethnographer', Foster's gesture towards the ethics of 'framing' the cultural other, against the 'danger of ideological patronage [that] defines [its] position in terms of *truth* and locate[s] this truth in terms of *alterity*', chimes with the critical agenda of Ataman's seemingly autoethnographic art practice. A parallactic self-reflexivity is needed when it comes to the globalized travel of art, especially when the reputation of the travelling artist comes primarily from contemporary Euro-American visual arts scenes. Critiquing the ethnographic turn and the discourse of the global in contemporary arts, Foster argues that 'self-othering can flip into self-absorption, in which the project of "ethnographic self-fashioning" becomes the practice of a narcissistic self-refurbishing'.¹⁵ As will become clear, the versatile textuality and the indexical ambivalence in Ataman's videos, functioning as a continuous visual self-alteration, offers a queer alternative to what Foster sets as two risky extremes in artistic reflexivity, 'a reductive over-identification with'

16 Ibid., p. 203.

17 Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), pp. 6–7.

18 For a critical understanding of drag performativity, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), and *Bodies That Matter: on the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993).

19 Alisa Lebow, 'Faking what? Making a mockery of documentary', in Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner (eds), *F is For Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 231. Lebow performs a psychoanalytical critique of the distinction between mockumentary and documentary in terms of the urge for 'achieving a glimpse of the Real' (p. 236). She considers 'docudrag', previously conceptualized with Marcos Becquer, as a specific mockumentary form where 'the compelling parallels [between] the models of gender mimesis and genre mimesis' appears onscreen.

20 Saul Anton, 'A thousand words: Kutluğ Ataman talks about $1 + 1 = 1$ ', *Artforum*, vol. 41, no. 6 (2003), p. 116.

21 Ana Finel Honigman, 'What the structure defines: an interview with Kutluğ Ataman', *Art Journal*, vol. 63, no. 1 (2004), p. 86.

22 Kutluğ Ataman, 'Fictional truths: an interview with Francesco Stocchi', *Spike: Art Quarterly*, no. 17 (2008), pp. 51–2.

and 'a murderous disidentification from' the other.¹⁶ The parallaxic subject in Ataman's practice is what Slavoj Žižek defines as 'the gap between the individual and the "impersonal" social dimension', a constitutive gap 'inscribed back within the individual himself'. What Žižek conceptualizes as *the parallax gap*, 'separating the One from itself', is dramatically addressed by Ataman's art – as the gap between self and other, reality and fiction, document and performance, constative and performative, universal and particular.¹⁷

Ataman manipulates the filmic-generic form via content, which in *Never My Soul* alludes to the most popular embodiment of (early 1990s) queer theory that allegorizes, denaturalizes and re-marks the unmarked, hegemonic status of heterosexuality: the melancholic drag queen.¹⁸ *Never My Soul!* is an intentionally failed documentary 'about and in drag', a docudrag.¹⁹ What makes Ataman's narrative 'in drag' is his method of intermingling the scripted and the unscripted segments of the protagonist's performance, which he conceptualizes as parallaxic: 'I had my subject talk about her life as a transvestite. We filmed it and transcribed what she said. Then she relearned it, and we refilmed that. I intercut these two versions to create a kind of parallax view. ... I wanted to create a formal expression of her parallel situation.'²⁰

My concern was to parallax everything, so everything is reflecting back to itself. Subjects like Ceyhan and Semiha aid in the process of creating those metapieces, because they are constantly referring back to their roles as actresses and therefore instigating the viewer's investigation into the nature of these assumed and prescribed relationships.

Ultimately this artifice makes you realize how reality is created and how lies can be no less true than what is understood as truth. Truths are also fabricated. People like to describe themselves as 'very real', but we create our identities.²¹

In response to the indexical status of his artworks, Ataman states: 'the construction of the real world you describe is more fascinating to me than the data itself, which is only an ingredient not the real preoccupation ... the multifaceted nature of my pieces allows them to be recontextualized in different times and places'.²² My intention here is for my analysis to operate within a parallel migratory setting. Suggesting a discursive 'match' to Ataman's agenda, I will parallax my discussion of *Never My Soul!* by simultaneously flattening and reelaborating the video's narrative; by travelling between the localizing and globalizing performatives of its parallaxed imagery. I will start with Ataman's use of Turkish melodrama and then move to methodological implications of the artwork with regard to both the limits of crosscultural critique and the medial discourse of contemporary video aesthetics.

Never My Soul! has been exhibited in several international art venues as a six-screen video installation with varying modes of positioning the six

23 Emre Baykal, *Kutluğ Ataman: Sen Zaten Kendini Anlat!* [Kutluğ Ataman: You Tell About Yourself Anyway!] (Istanbul: YKY, 2008), p. 35.

monitors, each of which loops six different segments of the film. Within these spatial variations, the choice to light the exhibition space dimly and to place vintage televisions in front of armchairs and sofas is a common curatorial element, evoking a peculiar mode of spectatorial intimacy within the enacted setting of a Turkish middle-class living-room. The space localizes the video's reference to the mainstream consumption of melodrama. What particularly interests me, however, is the artist's decision to adapt the work to a single-channel, single-screen video format for the Lehmann Maupin Gallery in New York. The order of montage in the video fragments of each screen (as well as the linear order of content, from the first screen to the sixth) is reproduced in the artist's montage of the single-screen version, giving the video a metafilmic status. Thus the experience of watching *Never My Soul!* implicates several embodied visual modes operating beyond the curatorial choice of installation. As Emre Baykal suggests, 'the reference to cinema and ... the strategies deployed to construct a narrative in conventional filmmaking' matters a great deal in the video.²³ My analysis will focus on the filmic practice and the aesthetic choices in revealing Ceyhan's so-called autobiography.

Angrily stripping off her dress and showing her penis to the camera, Ceyhan argues with Ataman in front of a boutique: 'I'm not worth three fur coats? Get me the coats or forget about me!' The implication that a famous movie star is preparing and rehearsing to act in a film is sustained throughout the loose narration of the video as a textual self-consciousness manipulating the spectator. 'I am here to act in a feature film. It's the story of a young woman with an incurable illness', Ceyhan says. The references to Turkish melodrama, the historically specific genre known as *Yeşilçam*, are supplemented by Ceyhan's identification with the actress *Türkan Şoray*.

Since the 1960s *Türkan Şoray* has been one of the most influential female movie stars in Turkish cinema. In addition to her near-ubiquitous presence in Turkish films, especially as a leading actress in *Yeşilçam* melodramas, her representation as a Turkish woman in the media (television and press) constituted a complementary offscreen persona. She maintained a series of professional moral codes in her acting, known publicly as the '*Türkan Şoray* rules': she never kissed, made love or appeared nude in any of her films. This artistic and moral self-definition, carrying a considerable eroticism in its so-called innocence and lack of sexual excess, led to decades of phantasmatic investment in her beauty within Turkish popular culture. Her professional success is a result of what I term her aural beauty, and her moral response to her self-image which resonates with the normative discourse of gender and sexuality in Turkish melodrama.

Women in Turkish melodrama are constantly forced to make moral choices between survival and sexual dignity. The films are full of sad misunderstandings between lovers who have been separated for years by ill-founded accusations of betrayal and sexual 'impurity'. Moreover, many of these films narrate sexual abuse or rape, by a cabaret-owner, of a female

protagonist who strives to become a famous singer while retaining her dignity. In this regard the clichéd line, ‘You can have my body, but never my soul!’, demonstrates how the genre redeems the female protagonist it represents and preserves the ambiguity of the other women it abjects. Referring to the gender dynamics onscreen, Ahmet Gürata’s critical reading of the remakes in Yeşilçam melodrama deserves particular attention here:

The western melodramatic binarisms between virginal/maternal innocence and fallen woman are often ambiguously combined in a single character: the heroine. The heroine of the Turkish remakes is able to protect her virginal innocence under all conditions, even if she is forced to marry someone other than her lover. The heroine earns her living as a singer when she is fallen and separated from her family. Despite a number of persistent suitors, she would never break her vow of chastity. Once the misunderstanding between the hero and the heroine is cleared up, they reunite. In the end, the heroine, who was economically liberated, is unconvincingly resigned to her position as mother and housewife. And she is no longer an object of the male gaze as a singer.²⁴

The representational discourse of mainstream Turkish melodrama generally presupposes ‘the excessive behavior of women [as] associated with over-Westernization’.²⁵ In the case of Ataman’s extravagant character Ceyhan, whenever Ceyhan’s identification with Türkan Şoray plays a central role, the spectator witnesses a camp drag mimicry of melodramatic conventions of womanliness and of bodies that the genre abjects as ‘fallen’. While gazing at her self-image and the poster of Şoray on the mirror, Firat says to Ataman: ‘It’s interesting. Even though Türkan is such a big star, she is still not world-famous. It’s so sad. She deserves it more than I do. She is my dear mother, everything to me. Of course I am not as dignified as her’ (figure 1).



²⁴ Ahmet Gürata, ‘Translating modernity: remakes in Turkish cinema’, in Dimitris Eleftheriotis and Gary Needham (eds), *Asian Cinemas: a Reader and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 249.

²⁵ Ibid.

Fig. 1. Ceyhan with Türkan Şoray.
Never My Soul! (Kutluğ Ataman, 2001). Six-screen or single-screen video installation. Reproduced with permission of the artist. Courtesy: Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.

26 Nezi̇ Erdogan, 'Narratives of resistance: national identity and ambivalence in the Turkish melodrama between 1965 and 1975', *Screen*, vol. 39, no. 3 (1998), p. 266.

27 Nezi̇ Erdogan, 'Mute bodies, disembodied voices: notes on sound in Turkish popular cinema', *Screen*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2002), p. 236.

28 Grata, 'Translating modernity', p. 252.

29 Savař Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: a New Critical History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 61–80.

30 Erdogan, 'Mute bodies', p. 239.

31 Fatih zgven, 'Mkemmek bir dival', *Radikal*, 10 October 2002, <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalYazar&ArticleID=647508>> accessed 20 June 2011 (my translation).

Yeřilam's non-illusionist aesthetics of melodrama, its 'cinematic discourse blending Hollywood-style realism with an unintentional Brechtian alienation effect',²⁶ bears an impure and ambiguous national referent within its peculiar transposition of stylistic and ideological concerns about modernization. On the one hand, Yeřilam's stylistic devices seem to transmute the narrative and the plot of Hollywood melodrama into a setting inherited from the Turkish theatre tradition of non-illusionism.²⁷ The 'unintentional alienation effect' comes from the genre's tendency to transpose the oral visuality of traditional theatre practice to the cinematic medium. On the other hand, a similar transfer also takes place in the ideological critique of modernity which 'assert[s] a localized version of modernity as opposed to the evolutionary and universalistic content of Westernization'.²⁸ Rather than problematizing Yeřilam's discourse of resistance here, I wish to depart from its status as an object 'marked with an ambiguity and transitionality' in Turkey's cultural history and memory; an object of what Savař Arslan considers as 'Turkification-from-below', of 'translation and mistranslation, transformation and a perversion or vulgarization'.²⁹ The failure of universalizing 'the modern', which Yeřilam's discourse dramatizes, makes its phantasmatic investment return easily in different, yet more perverse, ways. The artistic practice in *Never My Soul!* offers a queer alternative to such contemporary citations and reappropriations of Yeřilam already present in contemporary Turkish cinema.

Never My Soul! offers a camp reinvention of the Yeřilam discourse of the fallen woman through the performance of a transvestite's life story. Ceyhan uses her voice in imitation of the dubbing voice characteristic of Yeřilam as a crucial reminder of not only the mocked reference but also the filmic artifice at work. The discrepant, 'disembodying' voice of Yeřilam dubbing, 'possessing the screen actor's body twice, for narrative (speech) and for nonnarrative (musical performance) purposes',³⁰ is reembodyed in Ceyhan's performance. Her singing, as well as her intermittent mimicry of Yeřilam-style dubbing, helps to interrupt her ongoing pseudo-autobiographical performance of self-confession and prevent any so-called narrative line from achieving a unitary pathos. In this respect, one of the elements that makes the video operate as a queer pastiche is its transposition of Ceyhan's identification with řoray into a fake melodrama, a docudrama 'in drag', through which Ceyhan enacts the fallen transvestite. As the critic Fatih zgven states, the video is an allegory, as well as an anti-thesis, of Yeřilam: Ceyhan's spectacle exposes 'what the Yeřilam *idea* always implied but never showed'.³¹

Aware of the western origins of camp and of the critical risks in its decontextualizations and dehistoricizations, I contend that one could find similar queer performative strategies of resisting, of perversely reembodying, the dominant symbolic in different contexts. These strategies are to be understood as cultural modes of ironic reading performed by queer spectatorship, a lovingly critical exploitation of the mainstream culture, which works to deterritorialize queer-phobia from

32 My use of 'lovingly critical' is inspired by Lynne Joyrich's reading of Todd Haynes's *Far From Heaven* (2002), in 'Written on the screen: mediation and immersion in *Far From Heaven*', *Camera Obscura*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2004), p. 210.

33 Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1966), p. 291; Andy Medhurst, 'Camp', in Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt (eds), *Lesbian and Gay Studies: a Critical Introduction* (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 276. See also Brett Farmer, *Spectacular Passions: Cinema, Fantasy, Gay Male Spectatorship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

34 Cynthia Morrill, 'Revamping the gay sensibility: queer camp and dyke noir', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 112.

35 Joseba Gabilondo, 'Like blood for chocolate, like queers for vampires: border and global consumption in Rodríguez, Tarantino, Arau, Esquivel and Troyano (notes on baroque, camp, kitsch and hybridization)', in Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV (eds), *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 236–63.

36 Gavin Butt, 'How I died for Kiki and Herb', in Henry Rogers (ed.), *The Art of Queering in Art* (Birmingham: Article Press, 2007), p. 93.

within the modernist values of 'high' culture.³² There are several understandings of camp: while Susan Sontag considers it a particular identificatory mode in the act of reading that claims 'a good taste of a bad taste' or assigns a 'high' value to the 'low' or the debased, Andy Medhurst insists on its gay-specific definition as 'defensive offensiveness'.³³

Involving a queer relationship to language, culture and aesthetics, camp contests heteronormative signifying practices in *performing* cultural value. It can be regarded as a linguistic return of the abject, 'the suture of queer to the dominant via its resignifiable blind-spots [or] an affective response – a *jouissance interruptus* – of the queer subject that results from the homophobic effects of an un-queer ontology'.³⁴ Ceyhan's divadom installed in a Yeşilçam setting in *Never My Soul!* shares an affinity with camp. While not necessarily de-gaying its sensibility, this discussion incorporates camp as a concept that travels crossculturally to the extent that it acts as a sexually perverse reclamation of history through a critical and aesthetic exploitation and appropriation of a nation's cultural historical capital, high or low. Joseba Gabilondo problematizes global transpositions of queer and camp using various Latin American texts as case studies. What Gabilondo regards as 'border culture', in the Latino context, is strongly related to visual cultures of global consumption. Hence the imageries of kitsch, camp and baroque operate here at various levels of hybridity, where cultural parameters of the local and the global become severely confused.³⁵ However, *Never My Soul!* partially withholds its camp sensibility from the global contemporary art consumer's anonymous encounter with Ceyhan. Camp, in the video, acts as a travesty of the gendered margins constantly ostracized as abject by the various ideological fractions within the dominant normative discourses of nationalist modernism in Turkey.

Ataman's parallaxic agenda of intermingling the serious and the unserious, the dramatic and the comedic, the documentary and the fictive, enables *Never My Soul!* to promise an impersonal, and thus capacious, spectatorial engagement. In his reading of the drag cabaret performance of Kiki and Herb, Gavin Butt conceptualizes an aesthetics of ambiguity in queer theatricality where 'the performance prevents us from dwelling in one emotional frame of reference for very long, either of melodramatic pathos or comedic pathos'. Butt situates the concept 'queer seriousness' in the performative intervention to blur 'conventional lines between opposing social and cultural categories ... between supposedly discrete and distinctive affective states of the heartfelt and the playful, sincerity and theatricality'.³⁶ Queer seriousness, as a thematic category, acts as a hybrid reappropriation of contemporary pastiche/parody, camp, drag performativity and queer performance. The ambivalence of Ceyhan's performance, as an effect of Ataman's manipulation, bears a queer seriousness: drag with critical supplements. There is no hierarchical distinction between Ceyhan as prostitute, transvestite, patient and victim of trans-phobic Turkish police, and Ceyhan as actress, Turkish diva and porn star: both are treated in the film as performative modes of

impersonation. Acting as two significant mediators of the video's references to documentary realism, melodrama and porn, the two supporting characters appearing in the work, Jessie and Ilkay, render Ataman's play with genre more visible.

Jessie's position as Ceyhan's admirer and lover in the video works as a performative of passive masculinity and male desire. The spectator is not allowed to know the 'real' place of Jessie in Firat's life. He is naked, he insistently wants to have sex with Ceyhan, his penis is almost always erect throughout the video. Ceyhan's attitude to Jessie is often angry, nervous, mocking and demotivating, which reduces Jessie to a position of submissive desire:

[Jessie] is like a young girl. He is camera-shy. It's his first time! ... Look, Kutluğ! If I lose it, I'll run away. He's an extra. He came to play in my film. But at the same time he's my fan. That gets on my nerves. [Miming the acting of Turkish melodrama actresses] Because I'm a woman who can sense true love from a very great distance. ... You hear, don't you? He uses my hairdryer so irresponsibly. This woman has no husband to pay her electricity bill. And she's in a low-budget film. She's living on social benefit. He doesn't care!

Throughout the video, Jessie appears to misunderstand Ataman's project and the characters that he is supposed to act out: the hardcore male actor, the lover, the cabaret-owner with bad intentions and the wolf of *Red Riding Hood*. His presence shifts the documentary intelligibility of Ceyhan as character towards the genre of porn. Ataman's playful exhaustion of the two generic truth-claims – the 'real' in realist documentary and the 'real' of sex in pornography – parallels the artist's deliberate disappointment of the spectatorial urge to recognize the 'truth' of Ceyhan's performance within its Turkish referents. Scripted or not, Jessie's remarks, insistently exoticizing Ceyhan, make him a hyperbolic embodiment of a normative, western, white, colonizing masculinist gaze. Jessie says: 'Magnificent, splendid, mythic. The muse becomes art. The mistress of art. Art calms the soul. Talent, voila!'

In an interview, the artist stresses that he 'hides his manipulations and interventions to the narrative and the spectator cannot know whether the tension between Ceyhan and Jessie is real or not, [and further, she/he] doesn't have to know the extent of [Ataman's] manipulation in this tension'.³⁷ In these mocked pornographic encounters, in which Ceyhan never seems to participate genuinely, the artist's 'parallax view' gains a textual self-reflexivity with reference to its own global travel and recognition. Ceyhan's long, unwilling play with Jessie's erect penis, motivated by Ataman (posing as the filmmaker and/or the porn director) and followed by Jessie's delayed ejaculation, demonstrates the artist's urge to allegorize not only the ethics but also the desire involved in the problematic of the subject to be represented (figure 2). Scripted or not, Ceyhan refuses to 'genuinely' reciprocate Jessie's desire shown on screen. The Yeşilçam plot of the innocent girl and the cabaret-owner is partly

37 Erden Kosova, 'An interview with Kutluğ Ataman', in *Kutluğ Ataman: Peruk Takan Kadınlar* [Kutluğ Ataman: Women Who Wear Wigs] (Istanbul: Metis, 2001), pp. 114–15.

Fig. 2. Ceyhan and Jessie: singing and acting for their 'porn' movie. *Never My Soul!* (Kutluğ Ataman, 2001). Six-screen or single-screen video installation. Reproduced with permission of the artist. Courtesy: Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.



transposed into an encounter between the non-western queer subject and the global/izing gaze.

The presence of another transvestite, Ilkay, is as significant as that of Jessie in the video. A friend of Ceyhan, Ilkay seems to be similarly unaware of what is happening in front of the camera. 'There is nothing to discuss, only shallow conversation', Ilkay says, trying to understand what the ongoing film project is about. Each time Ilkay appears on screen, the generic filmic pathos is transferred to that of documentary drama. In other words, Ilkay acts as a localizing agent, the conventional performative of localization, who tends to remind the spectator of the geographical reference and of the queer victims in that marked geography. Ilkay talks about the transvestite, Gonca, a victim of queerbashing recently murdered in Istanbul: 'It upsets me more. I am going to Turkey. It could happen to me too.'

Scripted or not, trying to convince her friend to perform as a senior *consommatrice* of a brothel, in order to reenact a Yeşilçam plot, Ceyhan fails to encourage Ilkay to enter the mockumentary setting of the video. Ilkay reacts to Ceyhan's performance by exclaiming 'This is so overacted!' Whereas the mocked submissive masculinity of Jessie leads the narrative dynamic to both a fake melodramatic and pornographic setting, the naivety of Ilkay and her fixation with 'reality' converts this into a fake confessional documentary narrative (figures 3a and 3b). Scripted or not, what makes Ceyhan's performance queer is her ambivalent self-positioning and flirtation with both performative forces of genre truth-claims. As José Muñoz's analysis of Richard Fung's autoethnographies also demonstrates in an entirely different postcolonial context, Ataman's critical ambivalence in *Never My Soul!* 'deconstructs and ruptures the white mythologies of ethnotopia and pornotopia': the epistemological and erotic desire, in ethnography and pornography, for containing the Other.³⁸

Ataman's presentation of Ilkay embodies what his agenda criticizes and resists: the unidirectional dynamic of 'address' and thus the conventional

38 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp. 77–92.

Fig. 3a and 3b. Jessie (left) and Ilkay (right). *Never My Soul!* (Kutluğ Ataman, 2001). Six-screen or single-screen video installation. Reproduced with permission of the artist. Courtesy: Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.



identificatory regimes at work in spectatorial experience. Complaining about her past victimhood and her extremely negative experience of prison due to her transgendered appearance, Ilkay becomes a subject who appears to be in charge of her personal history and speech in front of the camera. She demands a recipient in order to be listened to and understood. However, Ceyhan's performance (scripted or not), as with Semiha's (*semiha b. unplugged*), Veronica's (*Four Seasons of Veronica*) or Nese Yasin's (*1 + 1 = 1*), enables what Rogoff's curatorial practice attempts to conceptualize as 'the deregulation of experience, of who has the right to define and categorize it and of how it can become a participatory mode'.³⁹ Ilkay's complaining voice – the voice of queer exile – her discontent with Turkey and with the victims of queerphobia, embody the generic pathos of mainstream documentary drama which juxtaposes the queer relationality of what Ataman performs through Ceyhan with the video's performative mode of address. Hearing and viewing Ceyhan on screen, the spectator does not have to construct a personal identification: 'I do not need to mobilize empathy, sympathy or identification in order to be an appropriate listener, I am simply taking part in a mode of address which requires me to complete its circuit'.⁴⁰

I have watched *Never My Soul!* several times over the course of seven years, both as a six-screen multi-channel video installation and as single-screen digital archive material. Experiencing the video as a theoretical object, as an art object which 'can be brought to bear on theory' and to 'theorize our concepts beyond the academic articulations of their meaning, status and relations',⁴¹ bears the possibility of a dynamic and unstable methodology which can actively thicken and flatten its queer videographic surface or texture. While I enjoy the artist's play with Yeşilçam melodrama and the politics of heteronormativity in Turkey via Ceyhan's performance, I would still argue that the queerness of portraiture at work opens a conceptual territory beyond what one might consider, from within a discourse of nomadic aesthetics, as a localized or hybridized accent. Recalling also Rogoff's urge 'to agitate' the mark of identity and geography, I want to question the zone of intersection where that which queer aesthetics valorizes as *surface* and neo-Marxist critiques of

³⁹ Rogoff, 'De-regulation', p. 165.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: a Rough Guide* (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 185.

globalization and/or postmodernism devalorize as *flat* or *flattening* overlap and transfigure each other. In this respect, simultaneously inhabiting a queer agenda and a global contemporary art market, *Never My Soul!* acts as a theoretical object that allows a problematization of the intersectional boundary between the two conceptual performatives of the depthless.

Queer aesthetics, according to William Haver, implicates and inspires a pornographic art of existence. Haver argues that queer theory's obsession with and insistence on surface as 'being's most profound depth' works to undo the heteronormative constitution of sexual differentiability in which the corporeal depth can operate only as an abyss to be veiled in the field of vision. What Haver embraces as queer is an erotics of critique where the queer critic's 'pornographic reading' and 'absolute devotion to the flesh' remain the only way to 'make the [queerly] political happen'.⁴² Haver argues that 'art's work is an existential comportment that in its very happening acknowledges that what is at issue is not a surface that presumptively conceals the depth of being's being, but the surface that *is* being's most profound depth'.⁴³ This resonates well with Judith Halberstam's commentary on Frederic Jameson's critique of contemporary pastiche as constitutive of postmodern aesthetics. Halberstam refers to Mandy Merck's queer reading of Jameson's critical reflex in his juxtaposition of Vincent Van Gogh's *A Pair of Boots* (1887) and Andy Warhol's silk-screen *Diamond Dust Shoes* (1980) to demonstrate how Jameson's account of the body in/of representation, via the example of the Warholian body, 'depends utterly on a homophobic repudiation of the superficial, the depthless and the spectacular'.⁴⁴ In this sense, devoid of a unitary monopathic generic truth-claim and insistent upon sustaining ambiguity and artifice on the surface, Ataman's parallaxic agenda in *Never My Soul!*, a docudrag '*in* and *about* drag', serves for a queer aesthetics of the depthless.

How might the oral visuality in Ataman's work that is kept strategically on the surface influence a critical practice of reading the queerness in this imposed ambiguity without forgetting its global context as contemporary artwork? How has the critical scholarship on Ataman's *oeuvre* underlined the same discontent with the global art market but positioned the artist's agenda in entirely oppositional extremes of either reinforcing or resisting the profit regimes of globalization in contemporary arts? On the one hand, the curators Rogoff and Nash celebrate the queer relationality that Ataman's artwork imposes *with* Turkey (as a deregulatory agenda confronting the surplus value of identity politics in the global art scene), extracting critique and politics from it. Lebow, on the other hand, emphasizes the very gap between aesthetic and political concerns in the global travel of Ataman and his works' travel back home. Though fully aware of Lebow's concerns with the transposability of the English subtitles in

42 William Haver, 'Really bad affinities: queer's honour and the pornographic life', *Parallax*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1999), p. 13.

43 Ibid.

44 Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2005), p. 100; Mandy Merck, 'Figuring out Andy Warhol', in Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley and José Esteban Muñoz (eds), *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 224–37. See also Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1992).

Women Who Wear Wigs when exhibited in Turkey, and the supposedly self-imposed absence of *Kuba* from Turkey's art scene, I can neither mark and fix the cultural geography *as target* in Ataman's agenda in general, nor ask the ethical question of 'for whom Ataman's artworks are being made'. At the risk of endorsing exclusionary elitism and of reiterating the logic of profitable nomadism of globalized capitalism, I prefer to argue that Ataman's practice neither prioritizes nor addresses a primarily Turkish audience, or any specific national referent. It contains several other spectatorial modalities which deserve critical focus. I thus want to ask if a hierarchical system is needed, while examining the local and the so-called global parameters of such an aesthetics of ambiguity employed via the videographic surface. It is my contention that the opposition between the critically valorized, globally sexualized surface in queer theory and the latently queerphobic take on flatness in critiques of globalization would be problematized further when the aesthetic and ontological foundations of video-as-medium are taken into account.

According to Christine Ross, 'video works against depth'.⁴⁵ Treating its visual discourse of surface as a function of 'a mirror effect and no longer a mirror proper', Ross argues that the video as medium is an embodied skin and that the image it reveals allows a conscientious failure in representation:

Understanding the image as effect implies that the referential and the reflexive no longer have their function to mobilize the gaze in the service of a penetrating interpretation, they no longer constitute the gaze in its capacity for perception, in its access to meaning beneath the surface of the image. As long as the image is conceived of as effect, meaning lies on the surface.⁴⁶

In her reading of video 'as a migratory medium', Mieke Bal, thinking within and beyond migration as concept and metaphor, argues that what the intermedial identity of the video image articulates as space, as body and as time performs a migratory setting, a migratory aesthetic. Instead of unpacking Bal's departure from migration to conceptualize the migratory and relating it automatically to Ceyhan's exile in Switzerland, I want to refer to what Bal sees in video art: 'production of surface as skin [through the] poetics of video in *intimacy*'.⁴⁷ Bal regards the encounter of the spectator with the video-as-medium as an encounter between 'intimate strangers'. What triggers a heterotopic space of such an impersonal intimacy is what characterizes video: 'the [videographic] surface that, on the one hand, shows, and on the other, withholds'.⁴⁸ This is the link between Ross and Bal: video as the disidentificatory medial surface, surface as libidinal skin, where 'the image invites the gaze to slide across it'.⁴⁹

The discourse of the intimate resonates well with the second-generation queer thought on the ethics of the impersonal and the anonymous – as seen in the work of Tim Dean and Leo Bersani.⁵⁰ In this sense, Bal's

⁴⁵ Christine Ross, 'Lamented moments/desired objects of video art: towards an aesthetics of discrepancy', in Janine Marchessault (ed.), *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 1995), p. 131.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁴⁷ Mieke Bal, 'Heterochronotopia', in Murat Aydemir and Alex Rotas (eds), *Migratory Settings*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), p. 52 (my emphasis).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁹ Ross, 'Lamented moments', p. 130.

⁵⁰ Tim Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

conceptual examination of the ‘migratory’ through the medial ontology and ethics of relationality in video art can easily be extrapolated to include the concept of queer and its critical modes of erotic/ascetic relationality as an alternative to understanding video as medium.

In his study on the gay male subculture of barebacking, Dean calls for the urgency to ‘elaborate something other than a politics of empathy, identification, and recognition’.⁵¹ According to Dean’s argument, which works to articulate methodologically an ethic of alterity beyond identification politics while writing about gay male barebacking, ‘it is possible to care about something without recognizing oneself (or an aspect of oneself) in it’.⁵² Bersani conceptualizes this as ‘impersonal narcissism’ and considers such a vision of expansive self as a ‘powerful weapon against the necessities, and the very necessity, of settled being’.⁵³ Dean and Bersani conceptualize a mode of relationality where the sexual as referent is sublimated ‘as not the repressively redemptive desexualization of sexuality, but its much more interesting and progressive degenitalization’.⁵⁴ Through Ataman’s parallaxic presentation of Ceyhan, *Never My Soul!* enacts a queer erotics of impersonal relationality.

Scripted or not, Ceyhan, by her bathtub (figure 4), becomes angry with the artist: ‘Not now darling. This is bath time. This is my private life. No filming. Please give me half an hour. I’ll jerk off. Is it possible to come? If you’ll permit. I am so tense!’ The video also contains a fairly long scene of Ceyhan in her bathtub talking about her childhood memories: the 1980 military coup in Turkey, the absence of her mother, the violence of her father, the sexual abuse by a family relative. ‘Come on, leave the camera. Join me. See what I’ll give you’, says Ceyhan, flirting with the artist in her Yeşilçam-style dubbing voice. Not only the intimate mise-en-scene (Ceyhan in the bathtub naked) but also the performative mode of the so-called confession mocks the pathos of documentary realism: ‘I’d always known that I was different even at the age of seven or eight. I didn’t have a name for it, but I knew. Now I can name it. ... I was a star.’

Ataman’s aesthetic performance of conscientious ambiguity in *Never My Soul!* operates primarily as a theoretical and methodological object. Although his artworks in general address banal, everyday, national, gendered, sexual, ethnic and racial referents, there usually appears an erotic indifference towards videographic surface which calls for an intersubjective exchange from within the work’s intended ambiguity. Ataman’s parallax supplements the queer alterity on screen. As Nash argues, ‘instead of reinforcing an ego defensively against difference, Ataman proposes an integration or reincorporation of difference’.⁵⁵

Being exposed to the spectacle onscreen and trying to follow, empathize with or interpret the moving image, the critic or the spectator is expected to find himself ‘performing performatively’.⁵⁶ Rogoff’s emphasis on ‘being addressed’ in Ataman’s work echoes with an ethical mode of sustaining representational ambiguity which enables the very

51 Dean, *Unlimited Intimacy*, p. 24.

52 Ibid., p. 25.

53 Bersani and Phillips, *Intimacies*, p. 30.

54 Tim Dean, *Beyond Sexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 276.

55 Nash, ‘Kutluğ Ataman’s experiment’s with truth’, pp. 47–8

56 Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, pp. 189–90.

Fig. 4. Ceyhan by her bathtub. *Never My Soul!* (Kutluğ Ataman, 2001). Six-screen or single-screen video installation. Reproduced with permission of the artist. Courtesy: Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.



⁵⁷ Rogoff, 'De-Regulation', pp. 165–67.

surface to perform, gain affective depth, address the receiver and 'demand a response'.⁵⁷

'You want me to tell everything all at once? Warm me up, sugar!', says Ceyhan, rubbing the depilatory cream over her naked body and reacting to the immediacy of the artist's curious questions. In another segment of the video, humorously mimicking a pornographic cum-shot, Ceyhan talks to Jessie while 'helping' him masturbate and pointing her finger to his leg: 'You come here. This line. The script is like that.' The self-mocking ethos in *Never My Soul!* prevents the location of both Ceyhan's and the artist's authorial power in the performance on screen. The truth of what Ceyhan is being constantly 'warmed up' for is as performative as the truth of Jessie's ejaculation.

Reading James Coleman's *Photograph* (1998–99) as 'a theoretical object' that enacts performativity via the 'conflation of performance and performativity', Bal questions the possibilities of 'mess[ing] up the two concepts' without forgetting their theoretical distinctions.⁵⁸ In a similar vein, Ataman's treatment of video as a parallaxed document works to 'mobiliz[e] the staging of subjectivity as a way of building and giving agency': the video does this 'by foregrounding ... the *performativity of performance*'.⁵⁹ The artistic intent, hiding its manipulative authorial visibility but nevertheless always reminding us of it, appears to negotiate its hegemony with the subject's performance. The video enacts the aporias of genre, authorship and intentionality in staging the very performativity of subjectivity.

Having a drink on her bed and talking to Ataman about Turkish cinema's hypocritical take on the issue of virginity, Ceyhan sees the newspaper next to her on the bed, and her eyes 'accidentally' fall upon an interview with Türkan Şoray in the paper. Expressing her appreciation of the question with which the journalist starts the interview, 'Madame Türkan, are you real?', and Şoray's response, 'It's the first time I heard such a direct question', Ceyhan starts reading from the paper the rest of the star's answer:

⁵⁸ Bal, *Travelling Concepts*, p. 206.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

Fig. 5. Ceyhan on the dialysis machine. *Never My Soul!* (Kutluğ Ataman, 2001). Six-screen or single-screen video installation. Reproduced with permission of the artist. Courtesy: Lehman Maupin Gallery, New York, and Thomas Dane Gallery, London.



I am a real living ... suffering, thinking, sleeping, crying, raging person, a real person. What causes such a question stems from a feeling cinema emits. ... It is as if I put a spell on cinema and cinema put a spell on me. I've only lived in cinema, in a dream world. ... Was I an illusion or a reality? ... I didn't exist outside cinema. I only existed through my films. ... That's why no one knew if I was real. ... That's why you are asking this.

Emre Baykal regards Ataman's practice in *Never My Soul!* as a 'deconstruction of the "spell" of conventional cinema'.⁶⁰ The definitely scripted encounter of Ceyhan with the newspaper interview is one of the moments when the conceptual boundaries between artifice and reality, performance and performativity, address and authorial intent, dissolve. Being in love with and feeling 'bewitched by' what that spell reveals as Türkan Şoray, the character Ceyhan Firat revealed in the video is a hyperbolic version, a conscientiously failed copy, a queer reappropriation, of that 'spell' that Şoray embodies.

In either the final segment of the single-screen version or in one of the final looping monitors of the six-screen installation, Ceyhan's body is shown in a hospital, next to a dialysis machine. The artist's long take on the medical process supplements the circularity of the parallaxed travesty at work. Recalling what Ceyhan rehearses for ('I am here to act in a feature film. It's the story of a young woman with an incurable illness'), Ataman's nearly four-minute closeup on Ceyhan's arm connected to the dialysis machine 'performs performatively' the indispensable relation between life, fiction, art and self (figure 5). *Never My Soul!* reveals intimacy via artifice: an impersonal intimacy, a skin-to-skin amorous act, a touching encounter.

In *Arts of Impoverishment*, Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit ask: 'Is there a nonsadistic type of movement? Is there a mode of circulation – within the work of art and in our relation to it – different from the moves of an appropriating consciousness?'⁶¹ These questions, with their seemingly complex implications, imagine alternative modes of relationality, a non-

⁶⁰ Baykal, *Kutluğ Ataman*, p. 35.

⁶¹ Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Arts of Impoverishment: Beckett, Resnais, Rothko* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 6.

62 Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 7.

assimilating aesthetics of intimacy with the other, where the world's difference acts, in Bersani's words, 'not as a traumatic difference to be overcome but as a nonthreatening supplement to sameness'.⁶² Bersani and Dutoit conceptualize an aesthetics of impersonality in art, an aesthetics of a conscientious failure and self-divestiture in artistic expression. The critical practice within this collaboration positions its aesthetic subjectivity beyond the notions of projective selfhood. The passivity in such identificatory ambivalence is a critical passivity, an ascetic mode of refusing to represent and be indexed. While Ataman's video resonates with such an understanding of queer ascesis, this is not to undermine a critical aesthetic investment in representational visibility that the artist never entirely forgoes. *Never My Soul!* offers an ascetic practice that problematizes the self in its self-reflexivity and expands outwards from within the hegemonic representational modes of indexing art-practice in terms of nationality, gender and sexuality. The video thus bears geopolitical implications both for the academic and intellectual engagement with theory and object, as well as for the art critic and the artist. The relationality that my analysis suggests does not merely acknowledge the ways in which *Never My Soul!* performs as a critical transnational art object, and the artist as an ethical/political agent, but also proposes an ethics of performative methodology for critical scholarship; an ethics of critical engagement with identity politics, mediating a non-hegemonic encounter between queer theory, queer practice and its possible objects.

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'Neo-documentarism' in *Funeral Parade of Roses*: the new realism of Matsumoto Toshio

MIKA KO

During the 1960s a new generation of Japanese filmmakers vigorously debated the prospects for Japanese cinema in film journals such as *Kiroku Eiga* and *Eiga Hyōron*. As Aaron Gerow points out, it was 'quite common' to be 'both a critic and a filmmaker' at this time, and many filmmakers sought not only to theorize the potentialities of Japanese filmmaking but also to put theory into practice in their own filmmaking.¹ However, apart from those of Oshima Nagisa, the critical and theoretical writings of most of these Japanese filmmakers have remained relatively unknown outside Japan. In this respect, the recent essay by Yuriko Furuhashi on Matsuda Masao's *fūkeiron* (or theory of landscape) and the landscape film is notable for the way in which it has drawn attention to the important relationship between theoretical writing and filmmaking practice in Japan at the end of the 1960s.² I shall attempt here to highlight another film critic/director, Matsumoto Toshio, and his theorization of 'neo-documentarism'. More specifically I shall explore how Matsumoto sought to apply his theorization of 'neo-documentarism', or 'new realism', in the production of his narrative feature, *Bara no Sōretsu/ Funeral Parade of Roses* (1969). In this essay I shall indicate the way in which Matsumoto's realism, as evidenced in this film, set out not only to investigate the visible and invisible 'realities' of Japan during a period characterized by student radicalism and a flourishing underground culture but to address the 'independent value of cinema more distinctly as another reality'.³

1 Aaron Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto, *Documentary Box 9* (1996), available online in Japanese and English, <<http://www.yidff.jp/docbox/9/box9-2-e.html>> accessed 6 June 2009.

2 Yuriko Furuhashi, 'Returning to actuality: *fūkeiron* and landscape film', *Screen*, vol. 48, no. 3 (2007), pp. 345–62.

3 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

- 4 Abé Mark Nornes, 'The postwar documentary trace: groping in the dark', *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2002), pp. 43, 45.
- 5 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Zenei kirokueiga-ron' ['A discussion on avant-garde documentary film'], in *Eizō no hakken* (1963) [*Discovery of Images: Avant-garde and Documentary*] (Tokyo: Seiryū Shuppan, 2005), p. 63.
- 6 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Neo-dokuyumentarizumu towa nanika' ['What is neo-documentarism?'], in *Eizō no hakken*, p. 77.
- 7 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Nornes, 'The postwar documentary trace', p. 45. For instance, Matsumoto was critical of the independent production movement of the 1950s, in which leftwing filmmakers such as Imai Tadashi and Yamamoto Satsuo were key figures. He saw them as examples of those filmmakers who make democratic or communist-oriented films without addressing their own guilt or complicity with war. See Matsumoto Toshio, 'Darakushita Riariizumu' ['Corrupted realism'], in *Eizō no hakken*, and 'Oshima Nagisa yo, kimi wa machigatteiru' ['Oshima Nagisa, you are wrong'], in *Eiga Hyōron*, October 1968.
- 11 For the detailed discussion on Hanada's influence on Matsumoto, see Furuhashi Yuriko, 'Refiguring actuality: Japan's film theory and avant-garde documentary movement, 1950s–1960' (Dissertation: Brown University, 2009).
- 12 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto. Using the works of Salvador Dalí as an example, Hanada Kiyoteru argued in 1950 that surrealist artists tended not to be concerned with the external world that always shapes our internal world. He then argued that the method of avant-garde art that had been used to embody our internal world should also be used for an embodiment of the actuality of the external world. See Hanada Kiyoteru, *Abangyarudo geijyutsu* [*Avant-garde Art*] (Tokyo: Kōdansha Bungei Bunko, 1994), p. 138.

Matsumoto is a pioneer of avant-garde documentary and experimental film and video art in Japan, and started making short documentaries and PR films in the 1950s. At the same time he was also an influential and polemical film critic and theorist, who with his contemporaries, among them Oshima Nagisa, Yoshida Yoshishige and Teshigahara Hiroshi, was a central figure in Japanese film culture of the 1950s and 1960s. As Mark Nornes notes, Matsumoto's critical writings made a significant contribution to 'a critical turbulence that would shake the foundations of the film world in the next decade' and a collection of essays, published in 1963, became 'a bible for the new cohort of artists'.⁴

In 1958 Matsumoto published a kind of manifesto calling for 'neo-documentarism'.⁵ For Matsumoto, 'neo-documentarism' was neither a genre nor a subgenre of documentary. Rather it referred to a 'method', or a new kind of realism that would be made possible by merging the styles of the documentary and the avant garde. Matsumoto noted that conventional documentary films tended to focus on the observation of external realities without fully addressing internal or psychic realities. He also argued that conventional documentaries relied too much on 'theme' or 'subject' to determine the reality of film to which the 'form' is subordinated.⁶ This, he suggested, was related to their dependence upon temporal context, which meant that many documentaries would become outdated once their historical moment had passed.⁷ This argument may also be linked to Matsumoto's views on the relationship between art and politics more generally and his criticisms of the conventional documentary film for subordinating art to politics and for suppressing the subjectivity of the artists, or filmmakers, who made them. For Matsumoto, such an attitude permitted filmmakers to collaborate with Japan's military and imperial regime during World War II. Yet, at the end of the war, the filmmakers who had been involved in making propaganda films were able to go on and make democratic films without interrogating their own responsibility for these or for their complicity with Japanese militarism. Matsumoto argued that 'both during and after the war, they made films according to the dominant trends in society or government without thoroughly investigating their own position within this'.⁸ He then linked this attitude to the question of realism, arguing that 'there was no difference between the realism of militarist film fanning war sentiment and the realism of postwar democratic motion pictures'.⁹ As Nornes suggests, Matsumoto was sceptical about any commitment to conventional realism, not only for its subordination of the artist's subjectivity to politics but for its inevitable involvement in 'a veiling of politics'.¹⁰

On the other hand, unlike documentary films focused on external reality, Matsumoto believed that the avant garde, as in surrealism and expressionism, was concerned with the exploration of the world of subjective experience and the unconscious. However, like Hanada Kiyoteru, a theoretical leader of avant-garde arts in postwar Japan to whom he owed a considerable debt,¹¹ Matsumoto pointed out that the avant garde tended to 'get stuck in a closed world'.¹² While praising its

13 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Kakusareta sekai no kiroku' ['The document of the hidden world'], in *Eizō no hakken*, p. 98.

14 Ibid.

15 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Eigageijutsu no gendaiteki shiza' ['Contemporary standpoint of the film art'], in *Eizō no hakken*, p. 25.

16 Ibid., p. 59.

17 Ibid., p. 61.

18 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

19 Matsumoto, 'Zenei kirokueiga-ron', p. 59. The word '*Aufhebung*' has a double meaning of both 'denial' and 'preservation' in the original German. Hegel used and exploited this duality of meaning to describe the dialectical process and explain what happens when thesis and antithesis interact. *Aufheben* means, most basically, to combine two contradicting and opposing things and lead them to the higher level.

20 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

21 Hanada wrote, 'Can avant-garde artists acquire the eyes of politicians? Yes, of course avant-garde artists can instantly be transformed into politicians – if they start directing their eyes to the external world in the same way as they look at their internal world.' Needless to say, by 'politicians' Hanada means those pursuing radical politics. See Hanada, *Abangyaru do geijutsu*, p. 143 (my translation).

'uninhibited, imaginative world', Matsumoto was also critical of the avant garde (here he refers to surrealism) for separating internal reality from the external world and for ignoring the fact that 'what is hidden in or what emerges, distorted and converted, from unconsciousness is all determined by hidden and repressed strains that exist in external reality'.¹³ In other words, for Matsumoto the interior is an extension of the exterior and there is nothing that distinguishes them in any clear or absolute manner.¹⁴ Similarly he argued that while they might look completely different, documentary and avant-garde films do, in fact, overlap. Using the work of Luis Buñuel as an example, Matsumoto suggested that the method of the avant garde which uncovers the irrational form of the subjective world may be useful in documentary for revealing the irrational and hidden reality of the external world.¹⁵ He noted that a deep understanding of the psychic realities is required for a full comprehension of the external world, and vice versa.¹⁶ He continued to argue that it is only by directly addressing the dialectical interplay of the internal and the external worlds that the reality of film and the subjective expression of reality could be combined successfully.¹⁷ What Matsumoto envisaged, therefore, was the potential for a new form of cinema to emerge at 'the point of collision' between 'the limitations and strong points' of two apparently distinct forms, involving the productive collision between a documentary approach to reality and an avant-garde approach to subjectivity.¹⁸ In this respect, in calling for 'neo-documentarism' Matsumoto was not simply proposing to deal with external and internal (unconscious) realities, or the artists' subjectivity, side by side but to explore the ways in which the two are intertwined. He believed that by bringing documentary and the avant garde into dialectical confrontation, or moment of mutual negation, with each other, a new realism would emerge in a kind of Hegelian *Aufhebung* or synthesis.¹⁹ Challenging perceptual stereotypes, the 'neo-documentarism' would then resort to both orthodox documentary and avant-garde conventions in order to achieve a new kind of cinema capable of documenting the internal realities determined by external physical realities, and the external realities mediated by, or expressed through, the subjectivities of the filmmaker.

Matsumoto, therefore, was concerned with the tripartite relationship between external reality, the 'reality' of cinematic conventions and the subjectivity of the artist, or the relations amongst 'the objective reality, the world of expression, and the filmmaker's subjective manipulation'.²⁰ Moreover, in refusing to subordinate art to politics, Matsumoto did not adopt an attitude of 'art for art's sake'. Rather he saw the potential political radicalism involved in avant-garde or 'neo-documentarist' approaches to filmmaking. In this way he took up and elaborated a position articulated by Hanada, who proposed the amalgamation of the artistic and political avant garde in the 1950s.²¹ However, while Hanada had envisioned a 'dialectic unity of avant-garde art and socialist realism', Matsumoto criticized socialist realism for its stereotyped ideas and for its indifference towards the methodological potential of amalgamating internal and

- 22 Matsumoto, 'Zenei kirokueiga-rori', p. 62.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Nornes, 'The postwar documentary trace', p. 45. Like many other leftwing intellectuals and artists, Matsumoto became dissatisfied with the JCP in the 1950s. He was very critical, especially after June 1960 when its leadership did not support the attempts of radical students to storm parliament in protest against the revision of the US–Japan security treaty. See, for instance, Matsumoto Toshio, 'Seijiteki zenei ni dokyumentaristo no me o' ['Eyes of documentarist for Vanguard Party'], *Kirokueiga*, September 1960, pp. 28–30. On his relationship with the JCP, see also Sato Yoh, 'Interview with Matsumoto Toshio', *Eizogaku*, no. 21 (2007).
- 25 Peter Wollen, 'The two avant-gardes', in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso, 1982).
- 26 See Matsumoto Toshio, "'Haisen" to "sengo" no fuzai' ['Absence of "defeat" and "postwar"'], in *Eizō no hakken*, p. 188.
- 27 Nornes, 'The postwar documentary trace', p. 45. The film *Security Treaty* was a propaganda film sponsored by Sōhyō (The General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) to oppose the Japan–US Security Treaty which was due to be renewed in 1960. There was a nationwide anti-renewal movement involving students, workers and ordinary citizens. Despite this opposition, the renewal of the treaty was railroaded through parliament by the then prime minister Kishi Nobuske and his Liberal Democratic Party government. I would like to thank the Yamagata International Documentary Festival Tokyo Office for allowing me to watch *Security Treaty*.
- 28 Matsumoto's *Security Treaty* triggered great controversy. While some acclaimed it for its stylistic innovation and potential for political radicalism, it was also severely criticized as a manifestation of elitism leaving behind or alienating the mass audience. See, for instance, Kisaki Keiichirō, 'Zenei erito no taishū

external realities.²² For Matsumoto, socialist realism shared this problem with conventional documentary realism, causing both uncritically to subordinate film to political or other social 'themes'.²³ Moreover, as Nornes points out, their agenda of filmmaking 'for the people' hypocritically 'hid an authoritarianism Matsumoto associated with a Stalinism at the heart of the JCP' (Japanese Communist Party) or the old Left.²⁴ Instead of socialist realism, what Matsumoto argued for in the name of 'neo-documentarism' was therefore a coming together of the political and artistic avant gardes that was similar to the 'political avant garde' later called for by Peter Wollen,²⁵ which could maintain the 'logic of political engagement' while simultaneously deconstructing the dominant ideologies and sensibilities through a formal radicalism.²⁶

Matsumoto made several short avant-garde documentaries or 'cine-poems', such as *Ginrin/Silver Wheel* (1955), *Anpo Jōyaku/Security Treaty* (1959), *Nishijin/The Weavers of Nishijin* (1961) and *Ishi no uta/The Song of Stone* (1963) in the 1950s and 1960s that tested his theories of 'neo-documentarism'. *Security Treaty* was, as Nornes points out, 'a collage film combining found footage, documentary imagery, photographs and drawings related to the 1960 security treaty between Japan and the United States'.²⁷ Along with striking visual experimentation, such as the mutilation of still photographs and spitting on the projected moving images, the film mobilizes some intriguing collages of image and sound. A shot of members of Japan's SDF (Self Defence Force), each holding a bazooka, for example, is accompanied by an ironic commentary quoting the Japanese government's claims that 'we won't equip military forces of any kind' and 'the SDF is not an army'. The film also ends with a surrealistic image of a nuclear explosion while the fierce bawling of a baby is heard on the soundtrack.²⁸ *The Weavers of Nishijin* features the traditional Nishijin textile industry of Kyoto, and while the film's visual images are poetic, the film subverts conventional touristic imagery by imbuing them with a sense of stagnation and depression (following the failure of the anti-US–Japan security treaty movement), implicitly criticizing the capitalist exploitation of labour involved in textile production. *The Song of Stone* consists of hundreds of still photographs taken by a *Life* photographer in stone pits in Japan, accompanied by a soundtrack of electronic and percussive sounds along with occasional commentaries about stones and the people who work with them.²⁹

Although only *Security Treaty* is explicitly 'political', these short films, as Nornes suggests, do demonstrate how Matsumoto's work sought to confound 'any easy distinction between documentary and the avant-garde' and bring together 'the realism of non-fiction film together with moments of shocking surrealism'.³⁰ These aesthetic strategies were then further developed in his first narrative feature film, *Funeral Parade of Roses*, in which temporal relations prove to be highly complicated, there is a heavy reliance upon intertextual quotation, and the boundaries between the 'fictional' and the 'real' are effectively blurred. However, this does not consist of a purely 'formal' experimentation. Matsumoto instead seeks to

sogai' ['Alienation of the mass by avant-garde elite'], *Kirokueiga*, January 1962, pp. 24–26, and 'Geijutsu no zenei ni okeru taishū fuzai' ['Absence of the mass in artistic avant-garde'], *Kirokueiga*, May 1962, pp. 18–21. Various reviews of the film were also published as a special feature of 'Kirokueiga, Tokushū: Eiga Anpojōyaku o hihansuru' ['Special feature: criticizing *Security Treaty*'], *Kirokueiga*, November 1959, pp. 24–32.

29 One of the most famous cinematic works using still images is undoubtedly Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1963). Although it is well known that Marker commended Matsumoto's *The Song of Stone*, it was unlikely that Marker knew about the film before 1964, when it was first shown in Europe at the Tours International Short-Film Festival. However, it at least suggests a degree of shared cultural purpose.

30 Normes, 'The postwar documentary trace', p. 46.

31 Jonathan Mark Hall, 'Unwilling subjects: psychoanalysis and Japanese modernity' (Dissertation: University of California, 2003), p. 123.

32 Director's commentary included on the DVD of *Funeral Parade of Roses*.

33 *Fūten* is similar in meaning to 'hippy' and also shares some of its negative connotations. While it originally referred to the mentally ill, in the mid 1960s the term came to be associated with young people hanging around Shinjuku station with long hair, bell-bottom trousers and distinctive sunglasses.

enact his ideas concerning 'neo-documentarism' not only to achieve the 'new realism' created by a dialectic confrontation between documentary and avant-garde conventions but also to explore its methodological potential for interrogating the political tensions of the period in a way that does justice to both visible and invisible social realities and avoids subordinating film's own independent reality to political imperatives.

Funeral Parade of Roses is a modern and twisted version of Oedipus Rex. In this modern version Oedipus does not live in ancient Greece but in the vibrant underground and gay subcultural scene of late 1960s Tokyo. The story revolves around the main character Eddie, a young and popular gay man working in a gay bar in central Tokyo, and the love-triangle involving Eddie, the owner of the bar, Gonda, and the drag queen, Leda, who runs the place. Though temporal relations are complex (and involve the replaying of some scenes), a series of flashbacks reveals the traumas of Eddie's past, including his abandonment by his father and his killing of his mother. The triangular relationship is resolved by the suicide of Leda; yet the happiness of the remaining two lovers is quickly transformed into a gruesome and tragic end. Gonda and Eddie turn out to be a real father and son. On realizing that they have committed incest, Gonda stabs himself to death while Eddie sticks a knife into his own eyes.

Although the narrative of *Funeral Parade of Roses* is constructed around Eddie, it does not employ a conventional chronological structure. Jonathan M. Hall pertinently points out that the narrative structure of the film puzzles spectators and forces upon them 'a daisy-chain of unending questions, each resolved only when a yet larger question opens up'.³¹ The director Matsumoto suggests that the striking characteristic of the film is its 'mosaic'-like style,³² constructed in various ways throughout the film. The film's narrative is fragmented, involving the frequent insertion of flashbacks, intertitles and interviews, the use of jump-cuts, and the insertion of shots and scenes which may or may not belong to the film's diegesis. In the middle of the film, for instance, we see a two-minute scene of abstract images. In the previous scene Eddie is seen on the street, but this provides no orientation for the abstract shots that follow. In a later scene it is revealed that the abstract images are, in fact, part of an experimental film that Eddie is watching with his *fūten* (hippy) friends.³³ The insertion of nearly two minutes of abstract film, although part of the diegesis of the film, disrupts this diegesis and clearly 'exceeds' what the narrative requires at this point. Similarly, repeated flashbacks revealing Eddie's traumatic past prevent a linear development of the narrative and complicate the temporal orientation of the spectator.

The film also quotes various materials from literature, theatre and other films, including Matsumoto's own work. The abstract film sequence described above, for instance, is actually from Matsumoto's own short film *Extasis*, produced in the same year. *Funeral Parade of Roses* starts with a quotation from Charles Baudelaire's poem 'L'Héautontimorouménos' (from *Les Fleurs du mal*), which appears as intertitles that read 'I am the wound and the knife, both the torturer and he

Fig. 1. Trading comic-book insults.
*Bara no Sôretsu/Funeral Parade of
 Roses* (Matsumoto Toshio, 1969).



who is flayed'. In addition to these direct quotations, the film refers to Kabuki theatre in the form of parody, with a lover's spat between Leda and Gonda presented in an overtly theatrical manner. The fight between Eddie and Leda also parodies the Western gun duel while simultaneously borrowing elements from cartoons, with the swear-words uttered by Eddie and Leda not heard but shown in comic-book word balloons (figure 1). Quotations from other films, such as those of Resnais and Charlie Chaplin, are also evident throughout the film.

However, a possible key to understanding the way in which 'neo-documentarism' is implemented in the film is the way in which it brings together, and fuses, different kinds of cinematic and artistic conventions. Elements of documentary style, avant-garde and experimental techniques, abstract and surrealist conventions are merged in such a way as to blur the distinction between the 'real' and the 'fictional'. In one scene, for instance, Eddie makes love with an American soldier stationed in Japan. As a result of the use of extreme closeup, the love scene looks rather abstract and overtly performative. Yet although the closeup, as Furuhashi points out, 'defamiliarizes the referent',³⁴ it also presents a realistic, quasi-tactile image of the skin of two people pressing close to each other. The scene shifts to another level of reality when a closeup of Eddie gasping is cut into an extradiegetic shot showing the filming of this love scene by Matsumoto and his assistants. In other words, the filming of the fictional scene becomes a part of the fictional film, though it is not a part of the actual diegesis (or fictional world). The scene is followed by an interview with the real-life drag queen Usagi, who plays Leda, commenting both on her life and on the love scene between Eddie and the American soldier. The confusion between the diegetic and the nondiegetic aspects of the film introduced by the insertion of a reference to the film's own 'conditions of production' is thus further complicated. Later in the film there is also an interview with Peter, who plays Eddie, commenting on the similarity between himself and the character he plays. The film also includes more informal interviews with young gays and drug users. These appear to be actual documentary interviews and indicate how the film is

34 Furuhashi, *Refiguring Actuality*, p. 61.

35 Peter, aka Ikehata Shinnosuke, was sixteen years old when he was scouted for, and appeared in, *Funeral Parade of Roses*. While commonly regarded as gay, he did not publicly declare his bisexuality until 2007. He is now known by two names: Peter as an entertainer and singer, and Ikehata Shinnosuke as an actor. See Ikehata Shinnosuke, *Peter: Korega jinsei* [*Peter: This is My Life*] (Tokyo: Nihon Terebi Hosō, 1993).

‘documenting’ the social and sexual upheavals of the period. However, the film’s ‘neo-documentarist’ combination of conventional documentary techniques with avant-garde selfconsciousness about the filmmaking process further marks and blurs, inscribes and erases, the boundaries between the ‘real’ and the ‘fictional’ within the film.

This blurring of distinctions is also highlighted by the fact that apart from Eddie’s lover/father Gonda and a few others, most of the characters in the film are played by non-professionals and members of the gay and crossdressing community. This includes Peter (playing the lead protagonist Eddie), who is a well-known character from the Tokyo (gay) nightclub scene of the time,³⁵ and some prominent television commentators, photographers and news reporters also appear in the film as themselves. At the end of the film, the scene in which Eddie stabs his eyes is followed by a medium shot of Yodogawa Nagaharu, a famous Japanese film critic known for his commentary at the end of a weekly film screening on television, *Doyō Yōga Gekijō* (‘Saturday Foreign Film Theatre’). The scene assumes that *Funeral Parade of Roses* has just been shown on the programme, and Yodogawa makes a short comment on the film exactly as he does on television, concluding with his well-known phrase, ‘Don’t miss the next week’s film. Goodbye, goodbye and goodbye.’ While this may be seen as quotation or parody of popular television, it also points to the erosion of boundaries between the diegetic and nondiegetic within the film. Similarly there is a scene in the film where we see a group of weird people in black wearing either white medical masks or gas masks and holding a box of funeral ashes, walking slowly through the crowd in central Tokyo (figure 2). This particular group is called ‘Zero-jigen’ and was one of the most radical avant-garde performance groups of the late 1960s, frequently engaging in ‘happenings’ or ‘ritual performances’ in central Tokyo. The Zero-jigen performers were not, of course, in the film by chance; they were hired to act (or perform) as themselves for the film. Thus the scene achieves an unusual fusion of fiction (the world to which Eddie belongs), documentary (as it documents performance and the camera captures the



Fig. 2. Avant-garde performance group Zero-jigen. *Bara no Sōretsu*/*Funeral Parade of Roses* (Matsumoto Toshio, 1969).

actual reactions of passers-by to the performance), and fantasy (the surrealistic urban space created by Zero-jigen's performance).

In the 1960s, avant-garde and *angura* (underground) culture flourished in Japan. Along with cinema, this radical artistic trend was most evident in the alternative theatre and performances associated with, for instance, Terayama Shūji (who was also a filmmaker), Kara Jūrō and Hijikata Tatsumi. One of the most important characteristics of *angura* theatre and performance art was, as Perter Eckersall suggests, the often extraordinary and extreme physical modes of performance,³⁶ investigating the importance of the corporeality of the actor's physical body as well as its radical and transgressive potential.³⁷ As discussed, *Funeral Parade of Roses* documents Zero-jigen's street performances in which their bodies and peculiar corporeal aesthetics, along with their relationship to urban space, create an explosive eccentricity. Moreover, although Peter, unlike Hijikata and Kara, was an untrained actor, he nonetheless possessed a publicly marked 'eccentric' or 'queer' body. In this respect, the expressive power of Eddie's/Peter's actorial body in *Funeral Parade of Roses* may also be indicative of a particular sociohistorical moment and artistic trend in 1960s Japan for which excessive and eccentric corporeality was deemed to be a significant expressive modality. In a sense, as Gerow suggests in relation to Matsumoto's experimental film *For My Crushed Right Eye*, made in the same year, *Funeral Parade of Roses* also portrays and expresses 'an era' rather than 'representing' any specific object.³⁸

Matsumoto merged documentary and avant-garde style in *Funeral Parade of Roses* as a way of putting his own theorization of 'neo-documentarism' into practice. Stylistic features such as fragmented narrative, cinematic selfconsciousness and the tension between documentary and fiction are not, of course, exclusive to Matsumoto. The director was influenced by the European modernist art cinema associated with filmmakers such as Alain Resnais, Luis Buñuel, Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker. Matsumoto always held Buñuel's works in high esteem and was inspired by his ability simultaneously to uncover the irrationality of human beings and the absurdity of the external world.³⁹ His affinity to American underground cinema and the works of Jonas Mekas, Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith, Carl Linder and Andy Warhol is also apparent.⁴⁰ *Funeral Parade of Roses* echoes with the work of these American underground filmmakers both in terms of their opposition to the 'dominant system' of filmmaking and their rejection of social, sexual and cultural conformity. Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963), for example, shares both thematic and stylistic features with *Funeral Parade of Roses* in the way in which it documents a group of homosexuals and drag queens and employs solarization and extreme closeup to defamiliarize the image. The use of collage techniques and a confrontational exhibition of underground culture and homoerotic imagery may also be found in the work of Anger. Commenting on Anger's *Scorpio Rising*, Matsumoto praised the film for expressing the 'depressive mood of the period in frantic images in which pathos and logic confront each other in tension'.⁴¹

36 Peter Eckersall, *Theorizing the Angura Space: Avant-garde Performance and Politics in Japan, 1960–2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

37 Ibid.

38 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

39 Matsumoto, 'Zenei kirokueiga-ron', p. 59.

40 In the film, one of the Eddie's *fūten* friends quotes Mekas's remark that 'All existing knowledge and definitions of cinema have been erased. All doors are now open.'

41 Matsumoto Toshio 'Kanōsei wa doko ni arunoka: 60nendai no abangyarudo tachi' ['Where are potentials? – avant-gardes in 1960s'], *Eiga Hyōron*, February 1967, p. 26. Matsumoto noted that although there were attempts to show Anger's *Scorpio Rising* at underground film festivals in Japan in 1966 and 1967, on both occasions it was seized by customs due to censorship problems. It was at the preview for customs in 1966 that Matsumoto was able to watch the film.

42 Ibid.

43 Furuhashi, *Refiguring Actuality*, p. 68.

44 Matsuda Masao, 'Bara no Sôretsu: Eizô no bankokuhakurankai' ['Funeral Parade of Roses: the world exposition of images'], in *Bara to mumeisha* [Rose and the Nameless] (Tokyo: Hôga Shoten, 1970), p. 150.

He also suggested that Anger's work was not only avant garde but also documentary in character, given how it sought to reveal the consciousness of both the characters and the period through a succession of 'documented' actions.⁴² Matsumoto was also, of course, a contemporary of the Japanese new wave and avant-garde filmmakers of the 1960s. As Furuhashi suggests, directors such as Oshima Nagisa, Teshigahara Hiroshi and Wakamatsu Kôji often highlight in their works 'the tension between actuality-effect constructed by the mainstream media and the avant-garde effects of defamiliarization'.⁴³ It may be for this reason that Matsuda Masao (with an element of sarcasm) refers to *Funeral Parade of Roses* as a 'world exposition of images', given the range of references the film makes to other films made both within and outside of Japan.⁴⁴ From a more positive perspective, however, *Funeral Parade of Roses* may be seen to belong to, and bring together elements of, both a more general international avant-garde artistic movement and underground subculture and a more culturally specific mode of radical filmmaking associated with young directors in Japan.

Along with the 'neo-documentarist' aesthetic devices employed, it is also important to consider what kinds of social reality are explored or depicted in this new realism. Along with many other places, Japan witnessed a significant paradigm shift in the 1960s. The radical student movement of the period, for example, aggressively challenged the 'old political system' that had been sustained under the mask of postwar democracy. An underground counterculture also flourished, breaking away from, and challenging, traditional social and moral values. *Funeral Parade of Roses*, therefore, incorporates scenes relating to both the student movement and the counterculture, such as that of the *fûten* and Zero-jigen, thereby 'documenting' through both traditional and more abstract techniques the youth rebellion of this period (of which the film is itself a part). The film thus not only challenges the conventional mode of filmmaking through its merging of documentary and avant-garde style but also questions and challenges traditional social and sexual norms in various other ways.

First of all, the film questions the conventional norms of 'heterosexuality' and 'gender'. *Funeral Parade of Roses* is one of the first Japanese films to feature homosexuality and, in so doing, to 'denaturalize' heterosexuality. The film's emphasis on crossdressing also suggests the constructedness of gender roles. As Judith Butler argues, crossdressing 'implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself as well as its contingency'.⁴⁵ There is a scene in which Eddie puts on makeup that reveals the process of becoming a 'woman' or constructing 'femininity'. Similarly, the disruption of our deep-rooted conceptions of gender is also apparent. This can be seen in the scene at the very beginning of the film in which Eddie is shown taking a shower. We see first a closeup of Eddie's feminine face, wearing makeup. The camera then moves down to show his firm bottom and moves up again to slowly reveal his flat chest. This not only subverts the perceptions of gender and sexuality established in the

45 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990), p. 137.

⁴⁶ In this sense, the film's treatment of gender and sexuality carries echoes of Susan Sontag's early work on 'camp', in *Against Interpretation* (New York, NY: Dell, 1966), pp. 275–92. The idea of 'camp' may also be linked to *Funeral Parade of Roses* as a whole. However, while Sontag suggested that 'Camp' elevated 'style' over 'content' and was apolitical, in Matsumoto's case the style is intertwined with both the politics of realism and the student politics of the 1960s.

⁴⁷ As Sontag associates androgyny with a 'camp' sensibility, Eddie's androgynous looks also contribute to the way in which the film may be seen as 'camp'.

⁴⁸ Ikehata Shinnosuke, *Peter: Korega jinsei*, pp. 73, 115.

previous scene of lovemaking between Gonda and Eddie, in which Eddie's apparent femininity is suggested through the use of makeup, gesture and expression, but also testifies to the performativity and arbitrariness of gender and our reliance upon traditionally constructed markers for the definition of gender and sexuality.⁴⁶

It is important to note that Eddie's gender ambiguity is not so much characterized by his femininity as his aura of androgyny, which may be largely attributable to the actor who plays him (figure 3).⁴⁷ While Peter was scouted for the role of Eddie at a gay bar where he worked part-time, he was (and is) not strictly a drag queen or crossdresser. Before appearing in *Funeral Parade of Roses* he did not conceive of himself as a drag queen, though he occasionally used makeup when working. It was in this film that he wore a dress and a skirt for the first time. Trained as a successor to his father, who was a prominent traditional Japanese dancer of female roles, the use of makeup or female clothing for acting did not necessarily invoke a specific gender identity for Peter. After appearing in the film he made his singing debut as a 'peculiar beautiful boy-singer', extending the image he had now established. Recalling this period, Peter writes in his autobiography that the 'Peter who debuted was exactly the same as the protagonist of *Funeral Parade of Roses*' and 'I was acting the "role" of Peter created for me'.⁴⁸ This suggests that while the androgynous aura surrounding Peter (as discovered in a gay bar by Matsumoto) is certainly translated into, or exceeds, the acting mask of Eddie, the film also blurs the distinction between the 'real' Peter's persona prior to the film and his fictionalization or construction as performed in/by the film (which then fed back into the 'Peter-singer-actor' persona that was in large part derived from the character of Eddie in Matsumoto's film).

In this respect there is a suggestive scene in which Eddie runs into a small art exhibition. In a dimly lit small room, paintings of various masks



Fig. 3. The aura of androgyny. *Bara no Sôretsu/Funeral Parade of Roses* (Matsumoto Toshio, 1969).

are displayed while a recitation of an essay explaining the relationship between masks and human faces plays as background commentary. Commenting on this scene, Matsumoto says that the theme of masks is interwoven with the issue of gender and sexuality in the way in which the film deals with a young gay man living as a woman. It also points to the intricate relationship between the 'real' and the 'fictional', however, which may not be so easily distinguished from each other, or which at least affect each other in complex ways. Moreover, the issue evoked by the idea of the 'mask' also links to Matsumoto's concern with realism or, more specifically, with what he refers to as 'a tripartite relationship among objective reality, the world of expression, and the filmmaker's subjective manipulation'.⁴⁹ In an essay on masks, Matsumoto argues that 'a mask is not a veil but a transfiguring media. It not only covers the face but also actively presents another face.'⁵⁰ He suggests that, for filmmakers, their acts of expression, or films, are also masks.⁵¹ It could be argued, then, that the object or referent of the film is a face under the mask, while the mask is a film through which the artist's subjectivity achieves a form of authorial expression. In other words, while the mask may or may not reflect what is underneath, it will reveal the author, particularly how she/he sees the object and expresses what she/he sees. In this respect, Matsumoto's writing on Alain Resnais's short documentary *Guernica* (1950), to which he owes some inspiration for his theorization of 'neo-documentarism', is suggestive:

In fact, although Alain Resnais makes Picasso's *Guernica* a direct subject of the film, he does not rely on the material strength of the painting itself. The image captured by each shot, of course, represents Picasso's painting. However it is, strictly speaking, the *Picasso seen by Resnais* or *Resnais looking at the Picasso* and therefore it is no longer Picasso's painting. This is why the emotional impact that you receive from the film has been transformed into 'something different' from what you get from the painting. In other words, the simplistic notion of 'document' is already denied here in the film. While pointing the lens (of the camera) at the outer world, its focal point is undeniably focused on the inner world of Resnais. He did not try to *show* but to *see* the Picasso, and what he recorded was nothing more or less than the vision that he saw.⁵²

Commenting on the symbolic use of roses in the film and the film's title, Matsumoto once said that these roses were 'artificial'. He then links this artificiality with that of drag queens as an 'artificial gender'.⁵³ Although, unlike Butler, Matsumoto appeared to consider the female gender mimicked by a drag queen as somehow authentic rather than performative, the film nonetheless questions the conventional dualism that divides men and women. What is also important here is that while conceiving of drag queens as an artificial or false gender, the film does not treat their existence as fake; in one scene, Eddie's colleague in the bar claims that, unlike those who work in the fake gay bar, they are 'authentic' and 'real'.

49 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

50 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Kamen kô' ['Some thoughts on masks'], in *Genshi no bigaku* [Aesthetics of Optical Illusion] (Tokyo: Film Art, 1976), p. 254 (my translation).

51 Ibid., p. 262.

52 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Zenei kirokueiga-rorî', p. 55 (my translation).

53 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Watashi wa gei-bô no sekai ni nani o miruka: Bara no Sôretsu o tsukuru riyû' ['What I see in the world of gay boys: reasons for making *The Funeral Parade of Roses*'], *Eiga Geijutsu*, April 1969, p. 71.

Moreover, crossdressers may not be 'real' women but they possess their own distinct reality as 'drags'. The charismatic and androgynous persona of the actor Peter not only transgresses orthodoxies of gender and sexuality but also highlights the independence and beauty of drag queens, which does not rely on how well they imitate women. As he sees a parallel between drag queens and filmmakers, this may, in turn, be linked to Matsumoto's theorization of 'neo-documentarism', in which he argued that cinematic realism is not simply a matter of the film's relationship with 'reality' but also the independent and artistic value of cinema in creating another reality for itself. As he has explained:

The problem was that in those days a good documentary was defined as something that, first of all, had a poignant subject, and then was socially or politically controversial. In other words, something that had information value even before the film was shot. ... I asked how one could establish the value of the work in the expressive power and reality of cinema as cinema itself, instead of leaning on a comparison between the film and reality. As long as the film is confined to being a means or tool of representationally transmitting reality, it can be journalism or propaganda but not art. In so far as we demand artistic emotions from film, we should present the independent value of cinema more distinctly as another reality.⁵⁴

54 Ibid.

Thus the way in which he treats crossdressers, whose attractiveness and beauty do not rely on their reference (to women) but possess their own independent reality, may be associated with Matsumoto's search for a reality of cinema as an art as well as an expression of the artist's subjectivity.

While homosexuality and transvestitism challenge the conventional norms of gender and sexuality, the revolt against tradition is also evident in the way in which Eddie and his rival, Leda, are represented in the film. Eddie is young and wears fashionable modern clothes while Leda (who, while not old, is older than Eddie) always presents himself as a traditional Japanese woman wearing a kimono. When, towards the end of the film, Leda commits suicide, Eddie not only gets the man he wanted but takes over the bar. Although Eddie is not a politically motivated character he may, in some sense, be seen as allegorizing the radical student movement of that time; that is, to be functioning as a symbol of modern youth kicking out, or overcoming, 'old' Japan.

In this respect, the film's narrative of the 'death of the father' takes on an added dimension, with the 'father' symbolizing three versions of the 'old'. First, it symbolizes the old Japan that reemerged as a form of political reaction and conservatism in the 1950s (and against which the student movement was rebelling). Second, it is the 'old' Left – the Japanese Communist Party with which the earlier student movement had identified but had subsequently become dissatisfied. And third, the last symbolic father being killed is the previous generation of Japanese cinema, or the 'old' realism, represented both by narrative cinema

- 55 Matsumoto's criticism was directed not to any particular filmmakers of the 'older generation' but to the system in which Japanese film production and distribution were dominated by five major studios. Matsumoto saw the emergence of a non-commercial and artistically radical (avant-garde) cinema as the means towards the destruction of the established system of filmmaking. See Ōshima Nagisa and Matsumoto Toshio, 'Taidan: Ware ware wa machigatteita darōka' ['Talk: have we been wrong?'], *Eiga Hyōron*, November 1968, pp. 27, 28.
- 56 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.
- 57 Hal Foster 'Postmodernism: a preface', in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essay on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), xii.
- 58 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Konton ga imisuru mono' ['The meanings of chaos'], in *Gendai nihon eiga-ron taikai: Gensō to seiji no aida* [Collection of Essays on Contemporary Japanese Cinema: Between Illusion and Politics] (Tokyo: Tōkisha, 1971).

- 61 Matsumoto Toshio, 'Sonzai no keijijōgaku' ['Metaphysics of the existence'], in *Eizō no hakken*, p. 183.

- 62 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

produced in the major studio system as well as by the conventional documentary films that Matsumoto criticized for relying too much on information and subject matter, and for underestimating the value of film as a form of 'art'.⁵⁵

The film, in a sense, may be linked to a postmodern cultural practice of resistance. Matsumoto points out that the cinematic strategy that he employed in *Funeral Parade of Roses* may connect with the concept of the postmodern that appeared later.⁵⁶ Indeed, the aesthetic characteristics of postmodern art and film, such as the blurring of generic boundaries, eclecticism, collage, use of quotation, pastiche and parody, are all evident. However, if *Funeral Parade of Roses* may be seen as postmodern, it is more in terms of what Hal Foster refers to as a radical 'postmodernism of resistance', which challenges the status quo, than a 'postmodernism of reaction', which is associated with nostalgia for the past.⁵⁷ Matsumoto argues that 'more than criticizing the modern on the basis of the premodern, the concept in *Funeral of Roses* [sic] was to advance and rupture it by investigating it thoroughly'.⁵⁸ Thus the rejection of the established and well-ordered world governed by modern institutions and clear-cut oppositions (such as the dualisms that neatly divide fact from fiction, men from women, objective from subjective) was his way of 'bringing modernity into question'⁵⁹ and shaking the existing order at its foundations.⁶⁰

Made at the height of the radical students' movement that emerged in the wake of the renewal of the Japan–US security treaty, *Funeral Parade of Roses* was criticized for not being overtly political. Certainly the film does not engage with the specific political concerns of that time, such as the security treaty. While issues relating to the student movement and the Vietnam War are touched upon, these are treated in a rather episodic manner. Yet, as discussed above, rebellion against the old is implied in the film's use of allegory as well as in its employment of a cinematic form that refuses conventional realism. As Matsumoto himself suggested, a filmmaker does not necessarily 'narrate his/her concern with the period in a direct manner'.⁶¹ Rather than dealing with an explicit political agenda, Matsumoto sought to undermine the notion of modernity itself, and of the modern systems of thought that, by underpinning the political establishment, regulate 'our thought, feelings, and culture in invisible ways'.⁶² This is also an explanation of how the politics of Matsumoto's new realism emerged as a critique of conventional realism, which he regarded as collusive with Japanese wartime militarism.

However, although Eddie may allegorize the 'new' – the new Japan, the new Left and the new realism – his symbolic status is clearly ambiguous. As repeated flashbacks to his traumatic history suggest, he is also haunted by the past. Moreover, it is important to note that, while indirectly killing his father at the end of the film, Eddie has missed his absent father. He also unwittingly desired, and was seduced by, his father as a sexual partner – a liaison that leads to the film's tragic end. In this respect, Eddie may also allegorize a growing sense of the failure of the radical 1960s student

activism to overthrow the old order in the face of growing economic prosperity and political reaction and of its absorption into the cultural mainstream. Similarly, while Matsumoto was optimistic about the potential and power of the avant garde, he was also aware that the avant garde could be coopted, commodified and subsequently deprived of its subversive power.⁶³ In this way the film's enthusiasm for the new is tempered by a consciousness of the difficulty of overcoming the old social, sexual and artistic order and an awareness of the tragic consequences of failing to make a satisfactory break with the old.

Matsumoto links some of these problems to underground gay culture. He considered homosexuality and 'sexual deviancy' to be 'anti-social', 'poisoning' the natural order of things,⁶⁴ though used the word 'anti-social' in a positive way, as an 'oppositional force' challenging the established norm. However, he also pointed out that in Japan such potentially oppositional currents often became incorporated into the mainstream, becoming a sort of pseudo-opposition.⁶⁵ Yet Matsumoto also argues that the subsumption of radicalism into the mainstream would encounter opposition, leading to a kind of catastrophe that, in turn, would disturb our mundane life.⁶⁶ In this respect, although the film's ending may be regarded as tragic, the appearance of Eddie with his stabbed eyes on a crowded street in central Tokyo in broad daylight (figure 4) may be seen as a refusal to submit to the normal requirements of urban space and the public sphere in general (as, for instance, in Zero-jigen's performances). Retrospectively, however, the film's ending is also suggestive of what would happen to student activism in the 1970s: facing the waning of political resistance, some radicals moved in the direction of extreme and violent militancy. These radicals may have wished to continue to be an oppositional 'poison' to established society, and indeed, their violence shocked the public; yet, as in *Funeral Parade of Roses*, it was also self-defeating, and involved a loss of 'vision'.

Funeral Parade of Roses explores both the visible and invisible realities of Japan in the transitional period of the late 1960s. On the one hand it documents the youth rebellion of that time of which it itself was a part; on

⁶³ Matsumoto Toshio, 'Kizuguchi to yaiba' ['Wound and knife'], *Art Theatre*, no. 70 (1969), p. 17.

⁶⁴ Matsumoto, 'Watashi wa gei-bōi no sekai ni nani o miruka', p. 68.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁶⁶ Matsumoto, 'Kizuguchi to yaiba', p. 70.



Fig. 4. Defying the requirements of urban space. *Bara no Sōretsu/Funeral Parade of Roses* (Matsumoto Toshio, 1969).

67 Hall, *Unwilling Subjects*, p. 128.

68 Matsumoto, 'Kizuguchi to yaiba', p. 72.

69 Gerow, Interview with Matsumoto.

the other hand, allegorically, it communicates what Matsumoto calls the 'deep sense of depression of the era'. However, he explores not only these sociocultural realities of Japan in the late 1960s, but by merging documentary style and avant-garde convention his work also critically investigates the reality of cinema both as a medium of representation and as an art. Moreover, as Hall suggests, Matsumoto uses the Oedipus story as a structure to implant his own expressive (and oppositional) impulse.⁶⁷ In this respect, *Funeral Parade of Roses* may be seen, as Matsumoto suggests, as an implementation of his own art (or film) theory by linking the facticity of filmmaking with more challenging dimensions of homosexual underground culture,⁶⁸ as well as by exploring what he calls 'the objective reality, the world of expression, and the filmmaker's subjective manipulation'.⁶⁹

The Providence Women's Film Festival, Brown University, Providence, 12–17 October 2010

MAGGIE HENNEFELD

- 1 Chick Strand's play with the dissonance between sound and image questions what it means to give women a voice in the documentary genre. See *Woman of a Thousand Faces* (1976), *Soft Fiction* (1979) and *Fake Fruit* (1986).
- 2 Menken's experimentations with light and camera mobility, which portray the fluid and rhythmic potential of cinematic perception, provoke questions about the relation between feminist politics and the material limits of the cinematic medium. See *Glimpse of the Garden* (1957), *Moonplay* (1962) and *Pop Goes the Easel* (1964).
- 3 Ahwesh's Super-8 films, which evoke an experience of watching home movies, resist the 'aesthetics of mastery' associated with patriarchal conventions of narrative cinema. See *Martina's Playhouse* (1989), *The Fragments Project* (1985–95) and *She Puppet* (2001).
- 4 *The Woman's Film* (1971).
- 5 'Women Film Pioneers Project', <<http://wfpp.cdrs.columbia.edu/>> accessed 12 May 2011.

The Providence Women's Film Festival at Brown University was organized to both foreground and frustrate any coherent idea of 'the women's film'. A critically overdetermined notion, the women's film has encompassed as broad a range of cinema as is imaginable: from glossy Hollywood 'weepies' to avant-garde experiments that pose feminist questions alongside issues of medium representation (Chick Strand,¹ Marie Menken² and Peggy Ahwesh³); from documentary works that foreground feminist politics (Newsreel Collective⁴) to early women-directed silent shorts produced before the category of 'film director' existed as such. However, despite a recent resurgence of interest in the history and politics of women's filmmaking, discussions about women's films are too often segregated by film style, method, geographical region or historical epoch. The need for a radically expansive form of interdisciplinarity that encompasses different locations of feminist film discourse therefore constituted a key concern of the festival. Indeed, existing sites of this interdisciplinarity tend to bracket all conversation within the limits of a given discursive field. For example, the Women Film Pioneers Project⁵ focuses on the invisibility of women's participation in silent cinema in order to address fundamental questions about female representation and film history writing. While such projects are crucial to the interests of feminist film theory, the Women's Film Festival sought to deepen existing forms of interdisciplinarity by posing the women's film's theoretical generality against its discursive limitations, investigating

psychoanalytic, historical, geopolitical and experimental considerations of the women's film alongside one another.

The Women's Film Festival at Brown University grappled with the inner contradictions and persistent slippages of the women's film as a theoretical concept. The six-day festival exhibited over forty films, spanning 115 years of film history, over a dozen nations and a remarkable diversity of different cinematic modes, styles, contexts and politics. The heterogeneity of the festival's programming sought to decompartmentalize various accounts of the idea of the women's film, effectively rewriting their meanings through the differences between their varied and often contradictory specifications. The festival opened with three very different films: an Italian Cines production starring the once legendary but now mostly forgotten actress Lea Giunchi, *Lea and the Ball of Wool* (1913); the New England premiere of Cheryl Dunye's experimental documentary *The Owls* (2010); and the only male-directed film of the entire festival, George Cukor's *The Women* (1939), which features an all-female cast of MGM stars including Norma Shearer, Joan Crawford and Rosalind Russell. The differences among these three films – a modernist Italian slapstick short, a self-referential documentary thematizing guilt, murder, ageing and lesbian media representation, and a studio Hollywood screwball-melodrama prestige film – provoked a great deal of discussion and set the tone for the festival's challenging heterogeneity.

Lea and the Ball of Wool situated the programme within a problematic of ambivalence to women's 'liberation' by industrial modernity: the precarious basis of women's presence in the public sphere as consumers and film viewers. *Lea*'s parodic depiction of a young woman's machinic embodiment of traditional domestic labour – Lea nearly destroys her family home in her frenzied quest for a misplaced ball of wool – suggested interesting tensions when juxtaposed with Dunye's melancholic blurring of fiction and documentary in *The Owls*. The latter film intercuts a story of older lesbians' guilt about the murder of a younger lesbian with candid interviews depicting the degree to which the film's actors identify with their characters. The glee occasioned by Lea's 'hysterical' explosion of domestic constraints foregrounded the problems of ageing stardom and the lethargy of cinematic stereotypes that Dunye tackles in *The Owls*. Meanwhile, *The Women* straddled the divide, repressing *Lea*'s modernist ambivalence about the dissolution of traditional gender roles, which are relegated to the level of witty banter and innuendo, and codifying Dunye's reflexive study of sexuality and the politics of ageing with a conventional story depicting women who gossip about their friends' marital difficulties.

These critical and thematic juxtapositions continued to unfold throughout the festival, often surprising even the organizers, curators and filmmakers. A late-night programme of avant-garde shorts traced patterns and images of visual fluidity across a variety of works that contemplate female representation alongside the material limits of cinema as a specific medium. This programme included Chick Strand's *Waterfall* (1967) and

By the Lake (1986), animator Faith Hubley's *WOW: Women of the World* (1975), Rhode Island School of Design Professor Amy Kravitz's *River Lethe* (1985) and *Roost* (1998), Maya Deren's *Meditation on Violence* (1948) and Germaine Dulac's *The Smiling Madame Beudet* (1923). Strand's experimental use of collage to rupture the synchronicity between sound and image both resembled and problematized Hubley's *WOW*, which uses animation to aestheticize the mythological alliance between women and nature. The resonance of the unconscious returned with Kravitz's vividly textural abstract imagery, suggesting psychoanalytic questions amidst a programme more explicitly concerned with feminist artistic practices than with textual problems of the subject. Deren's choreography mapped the programme's lingering images of shape and texture onto the camera's mediation of a performer's body, while Dulac's surrealist narrative about a frustrated bourgeois housewife extended the programme's themes of uncanny resemblance and displacement to the historical and political context of interwar Europe.

Moreover, this programme provided a rigorous aesthetic contemplation of the very different lineup that had preceded it. A silent Hollywood Western (Ruth Ann Baldwin's '49-'17 [1917]) and a Hollywood musical melodrama (Dorothy Arzner's *Dance, Girl, Dance* [1940]), both features directed by women, provoked a desire to trace hidden patterns of feminist meaning within two ideologically codified and archivally overlooked industrial film productions. The slippage of broad thematic meanings between different, discursively defined forms (such as between the avant garde and the women in Hollywood programmes) constituted a key mechanism of the festival's interdisciplinary strategies. Interestingly, humour and irony emerged as a persistent problematic across our heterogeneous festival programme. The accumulation of humorous connotations around the idea of the women's film was both intentional and incidental to our festival curating. Irony, parody and other forms of humour have always played important roles in the history of feminist productions. They mark a key technique for foregrounding the disjuncture between patriarchal ideologies and how women understand their lives within them.

Alice Guy-Blaché (the prolific French filmmaker who 'directed' over seven hundred films for Gaumont and Solax between 1895 and 1920) performs an early example of these humorous tactics in her short film *Making an American Citizen* (1912). The expatriate French filmmaker provides a parodic take on the US national film industry's discourse of Americanization, highlighting immigrant Ivan's deplorable treatment of his wife as an instance of his 'barbaric' foreign behaviour. Guy-Blaché thereby suggests the contradictory overlaps between xenophobic stereotypes and American patriarchal norms – norms that American women reformists and suffragettes had been lobbying against for decades. *Making An American Citizen* and Martha Rosler's classic feminist parody *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975), a short film that comically poses the arbitrariness of the symbolic sign against its thorough implication in

- 6 Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982); Jean-Luc Comolli, 'Technique and ideology: camera, perspective, depth of field (Parts 3 and 4)', in Phil Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 421–43.

patriarchal ideologies, headed a feature screening of *The Man Who Envied Women* (1985), followed by a Q&A with its director Yvonne Rainer. The juxtaposition of humorous strategies among these three films raised especially interesting questions about the status of what precisely was being parodied.

Rainer's film, which repetitiously quotes long passages of psychoanalytic theory, layering borderline nonsensical dialogue over experimentally framed images of everyday life, levels its parody at the very notion of cinema's spectator subject. As posited by apparatus theorists such as Christian Metz and Jean-Luc Comolli,⁶ the film spectator is ideologically positioned by a falsely unified text that covers over its own internal differences in order to provide for the pleasurable immersion of its viewer. Whereas Rainer uses parody and quotation in order to complicate and disrupt narrative cinema's structural masculinization of the spectator, Rosler's piece thoroughly deflects this textual form. Filmed as a statically framed long take with a conspicuous zoom halfway through, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* displaces questions of difference and subjectivity onto the everyday implements of domestic labour. *Making An American Citizen* was produced during a historically transitional moment in narrative cinema's syntactical innovation. Whereas Rosler's film, through its aesthetically low-grade emphasis on everyday consumerism, perhaps exhibits distinctly televisual strategies more than cinematic ones, *American Citizen's* portrayal of the process of constructing a national identity suggests the degree to which it does not take its own ability to do so for granted. In this film, parodies of immigrant behaviour perform their ideological work through negative examples rather than through the diegetic absorption of a universalized spectator.

This screening programme serves as an example of the complex ways in which humour emerged as a site of theoretical overlap and contradiction among different women's films in the festival. Indeed humour marked a persistent topic of discussion, and sometimes very heated debate, between the audiences, festival organizers, and visiting scholars and filmmakers. For example, there was some controversy about whether Baldwin's silent B-Western *'49-'17*, which depicts a nostalgic judge who attempts to relive his glory days by hiring a theatre troupe to restage the 1849 California Gold Rush, was intended as a parody. This debate opened up broader questions about the problematic status of authorship in a festival orchestrated to increase the visibility of many overlooked female film directors. Other interpretations emphasized the centrality of humour to our current ideological problematic, as evidenced by the works of the festival's younger generation of directors (Lena Dunham's *Hooker On Campus* [2007] and Sonya Goddy's *Blood Magic* [2009]). Visiting filmmaker Yvonne Welbon described her own use of humour in her documentary feature, *Sisters in Cinema* (2000–03), as a strategy to generate greater audience interest in the problem of African-American women's marginalized role within both film industry production and film history writing.

Laughter also erupted at somewhat inappropriate moments as a reaction to the experimental feminist politics of boredom. Certain films in the festival used the medium's ability to capture duration as a strategy for representing the alienating tedium of everyday women's work. The intermittent return of audience laughter in response to a film's aggressive representation of boredom marked another interesting site of humour's embodied relevance to the idea of the women's film.

Other topics of intense discussion circulated around the festival's explicitly political women's films. These ranged from Lois Weber's *Where Are My Children?* (1916), which makes a pro-eugenics argument for the promotion of birth control among working-class women, through San Francisco Newsreel's *The Woman's Film* (1971), a consciousness-raising activist piece about women's labour and class politics, to Jocelyn Saab's *Kiss Me Not on the Eyes: DUNIA* (2005), a narrative feature about the repression of women in present-day Egyptian society. Issues of love and sexuality, crucial to conventional notions of the women's film as Hollywood melodrama, 'weepie' or 'chick flick', took on an equally thick range of meanings and contexts. The festival closed with a very rare 16mm print of Marguerite Duras's *India Song* (1975), a languorous and selfconsciously nostalgic story about a tragic love triangle in French colonial Indochina. The lures and problems of nostalgia unfolded across a variety of screenings: nostalgia for lost romance or the security of the family (Sadie Benning's *It Wasn't Love* [1992] and Goddy's *Blood Magic*), critical or parodic nostalgia for obsolete icons of commodity capitalism (Su Friedrich's *Rules of the Road* [1993] and Paige Sarlin's *The Last Slide Projector* [2006]), as well as a structural nostalgia for the lost experience of proper self identity (Ulrike Ottinger's *Ticket of No Return* [1979] and Yvonne Rainer's *MURDER and murder* [1996]). Sites of theoretical interconnectivity abounded across the heterogeneous festival programme.

The Women's Film Festival Symposium offered the guests, organizers and audience members an opportunity to reflect upon and discuss the festival's organizing principle, the very concept of the women's film. The panelists included visiting filmmakers Rainer and Welbon, Swarthmore University Professor Patricia White, Brown Modern Culture and Media Professors Leslie Thornton and Lynne Joyrich, Brown PhD candidate Paige Sarlin, and Brown MCM Professor Mary Ann Doane as the moderator. Again the issue of return – which played out across the recurrence of uncanny images during screenings – haunted the festival symposium. The return of the women's film as a historically productive concept for feminist film theory and filmmaking framed the panelists' attempts not to resurrect but to resituate this concept in relation to present day theories and practices of women's filmmaking.

Dance choreographer and experimental filmmaker Rainer⁷ performed a published piece about tactics in pedagogical feminism, recounting an anecdote about how she required her students to critique Laura Mulvey in the form of an orally delivered pop melody or rap. This thematic

7 *The Lives of Performers* (1972), *The Man Who Envied Women* (1985) and *Privilege* (1990).

- 8 *Sisters in Cinema* (2000–03), *Remember Wei Yi Fang, Remembering Myself* (2005), and *Living With Pride: Ruth Ellis @ 100* (1999).

foregrounding of feminist discourse's performative potential, an artistically crucial topic for Rainer, created an interesting contrast with Welbon's⁸ paper about the structural and industrial difficulties that confront aspiring African-American women filmmakers. The intersection between historical and industrial obstacles faced by women filmmakers professionally, and the potential theoretical forms of women's film discourse at this historical juncture, especially engaged the younger audience members, who posed thoughtful and optimistically critical questions during the Q&A session.

White spoke about the historical and geographical significance of film festivals in both sustaining and organizing an economy for women's film production. She conjured memories of the 1970s as a concrete 'place' for women's film theory and exhibition (the Women's Event at the 1972 Edinburgh Film Festival and the formation of Women Make Movies and the journal *Women in Film*), and pitted these memories against a present-day climate of geopolitical dispersion: how film festival economies literalize themes of diaspora, nostalgia and geotemporal longing that are prevalent in current women's films. Joyrich elaborated upon metaphorical resonances of White's analysis, discussing the entanglement between the categories of theory and practice, and the crucial importance of rethinking this entanglement for current discourses about the 'boundaries' of the women's film. Sarlin examined the labour politics of women's film geographies, tracing the historical shifts and continuities in definitions of women's work and labour. From cinema's ideological self-projection as a 'women's medium' in the early twentieth century as a strategy for appealing to bourgeois consumers, to the insistent spectre of film as a gendered form of work (its vital but unseen affective and cognitive forms of labour), Sarlin grappled with the slippages between women's films and women's work in order to demonstrate why the women's film as such is still a crucial category for theoretical analysis, especially given the current and recurrent instabilities of our global economy.

Thornton (*Peggy and Fred in Hell* [1984–2008] and *Adynata* [1983]) screened the first two of what will be ten instalments in her ongoing project *Let Me Count the Ways*, an experimental piece that explores the relationship between social forms and media technologies, foregrounding the dialectic between military innovations and mass media communication. Thornton's work provided a visual ground for reflecting upon the formal and conceptual specificities of the women's film, as well as its driving theoretical and aesthetic contradictions. Meanwhile Doane, whose work on Hollywood melodrama and film noir has played a crucial role in innovating and specifying the very concept of the women's film, moderated the discussion. Doane again helped to delimit the theoretical problematic of the women's film – its historical resonances as well as its insistent innovations of its own 'return' – across the diverse array of methods, styles and contexts represented by the symposium.⁹

All of the screenings at the Women's Film Festival took place at the Cable Car Cinema in Providence. Thanks to a generous grant from the

- 9 A complete audio transcript of the symposium can be found at 'Brown University presents The Providence Women's Festival', <http://www.brown.edu/Conference/Womens_Film_Festival/> accessed 12 May 2011.

Malcom S. Forbes Foundation, all of the screenings were free of charge – each viewer received a complimentary ticket to every screening at the Cable Car box office. Audience turnout varied dramatically from screening to screening. *The Owls*, *The Man Who Envied Women* and the avant-garde shorts programmes were among those that drew large crowds. Some of the more ‘challenging’ programmes, such as Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen’s cinematic experiment in the politics of ‘passionate detachment’, *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977), and Chinese filmmaker Jiayin Liu’s real-time documentary about her family’s evening preparation of dumplings, *Oxhide II* (2009), drew smaller but equally enthusiastic audiences.

All of the screenings and festival events, including the four directors’ Q&A sessions and the symposium, provoked significant discussion about the histories, politics, geographies and representational strategies of the women’s film, as well as the internal contradictions and the limits of this concept. The depth and persistence of the conversations that have already taken place in response to the festival provide powerful evidence that the question of the women’s film is still very much relevant to the issues of our present historical moment.

reviews

Catherine Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio: Women and Japanese Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008, 468 pp.

ALASTAIR PHILLIPS

The English-language study of Japanese cinema during the formative years of the evolution of film studies as an intellectual discipline was to a large extent motivated by two significantly aligned critical imperatives: the justification of a corpus of study based on the principles of a nationally specific model of authorship, and an attempt to differentiate this field from the dominant patterns by which western cinema had been understood as a narrative medium. Major studies emerged that defined key directors such as Ozu Yasujiro, Oshima Nagisa and Mizoguchi Kenji as being central to this project; whilst Noël Burch's much cited and much discussed intervention, *To The Distant Observer*, posited a differential ideology and aesthetics reiterated by the very title of the publication.¹ Perhaps the most extensive interrogation of this academic terrain to date has been Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto's groundbreaking analysis of the work of Kurosawa Akira, that attempted to situate an extended critical analysis of this key director within a revisionist understanding of the nature of Japanese film studies itself.²

Until quite recently, the renowned director Naruse Mikio has been missing from these debates. Celebrated for his powerful command of the *shoshimin eiga* (drama of ordinary middle-class people), mainly directed for Shochiku and Toho studios from the early 1930s through to the mid 1960s, Naruse has lately been the subject of a slew of major DVD releases and critical retrospectives. He has also begun to emerge as one of the key figures by which the study of Japanese cinema may be repositioned beyond the essentialism or fixity of national cinema frameworks and instead located within a wider and more fluid cultural history. Catherine Russell's extensive and engaging study is a significant step forward in this process and looks set to be placed alongside such recent interventions in

1 Noël Burch, *To The Distant Observer* (London: Scolar Press, 1979).

2 Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

3 Aaron Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation and Spectatorship, 1895–1925* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

4 Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern: Japanese Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

5 Miriam Hansen, 'The mass production of the senses: classical cinema as vernacular modernism', in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), pp. 332–50.

6 Miriam Hansen, 'Fallen women, rising stars, new horizons: Shanghai silent film as vernacular modernism', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1 (2000), pp. 10–22.

the field as Aaron Gerow's magisterial investigation of the social, aesthetic and political transformation of Japanese cinema between 1895 and 1925, *Visions of Japanese Modernity*,³ and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano's compelling discussion of relations between Shochiku's genre production of the 1920s and 1930s and Japan's encounter with cultural modernity in *Nippon Modern*.⁴

Central to Russell's methodology is a conceptualization of modernism that is interested in positing an aesthetics of the everyday. This is articulated, she suggests, by means of Naruse's dramatized engagement with the surface textures, experiences and registers of vernacular experience, especially when this occurs within the varied social geography of Tokyo's city streets, or the intimate and emotionally turbulent domestic milieu of the Japanese suburban home. In this sense her analysis is closely indebted to the formative work of the late Miriam Hansen, whose notion of 'vernacular modernism' is similarly a key point of reference in Wada-Marciano's research.⁵ As Russell explains, 'in keeping with Hansen's notion of vernacular modernism, [her project thus] brings together the codes of classical narration with the modernity of new modes of experience and subjectivity and does so within the parameters of mass culture' (p. xvi). Russell's interpretative method pays especially close and repeated attention to a detailed cultural field configured in terms of class and popular culture, and determined by various social rituals associated with the realms of work, leisure, family life and consumption.

Aligned to this concern with location and activity is the question of Naruse's commitment to the detailed representation of female agency within the spaces of Japanese modernity. This is evidenced as much by his prominent deployment of such actresses as Takamine Hideko, Tanaka Kinuyo and Hara Setsuko as his layered representation of the changing contours of the metropolitan landscape. As Russell points out, Naruse's decision to focus specifically on the affective nature of women's everyday experience bound his films intimately within 'the contradictions emerging from an intellectual discourse that seemed by and large unable and unwilling to embrace the role of the feminine in Japanese modernity' (p. 55). So how, in particular, were these contradictions resolved, or at least specified? Russell's central thesis is that, in keeping with Hansen's earlier instructive work on Chinese silent cinema,⁶ it makes sense to argue that 'one of the chief methodological means of dealing with a cinema that is at once so stylized and so down-to earth, so self-conscious and so realist, is through [the prism of] melodrama' (p. 23). That is to say, it is worth suggesting that there was a significant relationship between the complexities of women's actual sensory experience within the realm of this modern public sphere and the private ambivalences (and disappointments) that were then embedded and dramatized within the specific qualities of Naruse's mise-en-scene and narrative style.

I take this investigation as one of the defining achievements of the book, since it demonstrates Russell's capacity to analyze the distinctiveness of Naruse's method as a film director whilst

simultaneously grounding him within the vectors of a cultural forcefield that, arguably, helped to shape the very particularities of his aesthetic. As Russell herself puts it, 'the ambivalence of Naruse's cinema [was therefore] endemic to the cultural landscape of its production' (p. 5). Accordingly, she refers to a range of relevant literature, bringing together historical theorizations of the melodramatic subject with a return to the conclusions of an early generation of feminist film scholarship on the melodramatic form and its implications for a reading of western screen representations of marriage and maternity. Russell mentions, for example, Harry Harootunian's work on the Japanese cultural critic Kobayashi Hideo, who explicitly argued at the time of Naruse's early filmmaking career that the melodramatic figure of the mother had the unique capacity in its narrativized form to instil notions of 'subjectivity, memory and knowledge specific to the sense of time and place in Japanese modernity' (p. 54). She also turns to Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto's formulation that the melodramatic mode dominated the shape of postwar Japanese cinema, but cautions that Naruse's workmanlike place within the Japanese film industry nonetheless requires a theory of melodrama as adept at dealing with popular everyday film culture as that of the auteur art cinema defined by the likes of Mizoguchi and Kurosawa. In this sense, whilst retaining the capacity to be read 'against the grain', Naruse's major postwar work, in films such as *Sound of the Mountain/Yama no oto* (1954) and *Floating Clouds/Ukigumo* (1955), cannot be defined simply in terms of resistant national allegory. Instead his cinema, especially from the war years onwards, defined the emergence of new and varied forms of female subjectivity within a certain kind of melodramatic narrative that endowed its female protagonists with particularly 'sensual, emotional states of being' (p. 165), whilst simultaneously being marked by 'a poetry of awakening, recognition, and the beauty of small things' (p. 227).

This understanding necessitates a new and perhaps more nuanced analysis of the looking relations that have previously characterized the woman's film in its earlier formulation as defined, for example, by Mary Ann Doane.⁷ Gone is the sensibility of 'being too close', which in its most extreme articulation meant an apprehension of the consequences of being placed as near as possible to the tears falling down the face of the suffering woman on the screen. Naruse's conception of the home and its female sphere, Russell suggests, was 'a complex site of femininity', but given the means by which the shapes and contours of Japan's vernacular architecture operated it was instead 'pictorial space, rather than a space of desire, that [ended up governing] the dynamics of looking' (p. 33).

It is a truism that the spatial logic of the traditional Japanese home interior helped to define a certain emotional timbre in classical domestic drama, but Russell goes on to assert that Naruse's conception of screen relations was particularly determined by a register of finely graded glances and figural turns, to the extent that the emotional turbulence embedded within the overall structure of the narration was likewise guided by a subtle and 'intuitive sense of rhythm and visual composition' (p. 3). We

7 Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: the Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

8 See Arthur Nalletti, *The Cinema of Goshō Heinosuke: Laughter Through Tears* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005).

can deduce, given the paucity of any comparative examples, that this was quite different from the director's counterparts within the Japanese studio system such as Goshō Heinosuke.⁸ The director worked with the same editor, Takeda Ume, on about forty feature films. Together, they helped to shape a vital sense of the flow of cinematic time commensurate with, for instance, Tosaka Jun's contemporaneous theorization of the flow of ordinary, everyday experience within the everlasting present of the time posited by the nature of modernity. But crucially, as this book continually makes clear through its systematic series of chronological case studies, this conception of time and space had another quality, one inflected with a latent feminist sensibility. Japan's modernity was unevenly and contradictorily defined, and it underwent a sequence of historically unique convulsions and revisions within the course of Naruse's career, not all of which mattered to his filmmaking. But what is abundantly clear in relation to his conception of the cinematic image was his distinctive and profound interest in how women look, and how, in turn, they are looked at differently from the way they choose to look at each other. Naruse's cinema, as this comprehensive and resourceful book suggests, might be seen as fundamentally based around a feminist potential of the poetics of the glance. And the implications of what this entails therefore go a long way towards explaining why, in Russell's significant study, Naruse appears as the Japanese woman's film (*josei eiga*) director par excellence.

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Matthew Taunton, *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture and Mass Housing in London and Paris*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, 204 pp.

MALINI GUHA

Early scholarship on cities in cinema and literature has traditionally privileged the mobilities of the *flâneur*, the infamous stroller of the nineteenth-century European city, as the primary method of conceptualizing the representation of urban space. The image of the *flâneur*, of a lone male figure intoxicated by the sights and sounds of the modern metropolis, has persisted through the work of the quintessential theorists, novelists and poets of modernity, including Walter Benjamin, Honoré de Balzac and Charles Baudelaire, and has been taken up and revised by contemporary scholars such as Giuliana Bruno, Anne Friedberg and James Donald. Thinking about *flânerie* constitutes one of the more seductive aspects of this area of research, as it allows for an indulgence in poeticized language and imagery, including that of travel and pleasurable forms of streetwalking.

Speaking from a cinematic context, and one assumes this extends to a literary context, there is a burgeoning strand of scholarship on the topic of the fictional city that seeks to displace the centrality of the trope of mobility, and more specifically the idealized mobilities of the *flâneur*, in

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order to explore other modes of apprehending the urban experience. Matthew Taunton's *Fictions of the City* is one such book, in which the author positions his work against the dominance of *flânerie* and, more broadly, the emphasis on theorizing urban mobility in the current literature on the cinematic city. As Taunton states, 'urban experience is too often assumed to be characterized by the experience of losing oneself wandering in the crowd' (p. 2).

This book instead explores the nexus of the space of the home, social class and the city by shifting between two case studies, London and Paris. Practices of mass housing in both cities are investigated as a way of ascertaining their respective class geographies. Taunton begins in Paris with Baron Haussmann's monumental transformation of the city, then explores the legacies of this period in contemporary fiction and film. In the second chapter Taunton takes us to nineteenth-century London and to the work of H. G. Wells and George Orwell to demonstrate that the development of the suburbs produces a very different class geography from Paris. The final two chapters investigate contemporary modes of mass housing in both cities as Taunton turns his attention to the Parisian *banlieues* and the council estates of inner-city London, using films such as *La Haine* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995), *Nil by Mouth* (Gary Oldman, 1997) and *Wonderland* (Michael Winterbottom, 1999) to glean the effects of these forms of housing as manifested in cultural texts.

The comparative angle that Taunton embarks upon is largely a response to a second trend – drawing on French anthropologist Marc Augé's notion of non-spaces – found in the literature on cities and their various forms of representation. This proclaims the loss of the cultural distinctiveness of 'global cities', leading to the proliferation of generic rather than historical spaces across various cityscapes as they succumb to their role as nodal points for global capitalism. Taunton rightly contests a certain over-emphasis on the city as generic entity in recent scholarship by demonstrating that cities like London and Paris do indeed still retain degrees of specificity that make pronouncements of the demise of geographical and culture differences rather premature.

As such, *Fictions of the City* can be situated alongside other books that examine the neglected terrain of the home as the locus of urban experience, including Katherine Shonfield's *Walls Have Feelings*.¹ Given that Shonfield's work also involves thinking about housing conditions in London and Paris, and that she refers to some of the same directors and films as Taunton, including the work of Jean-Luc Godard and Roman Polanski, the lack of reference to Shonfield's work in this book is a curious omission.

Taunton sets himself a rather difficult task with this project, which is to find new ways of discussing debates, texts and theorists that have already been written about extensively in various contexts. This process of rereading that Taunton engages thankfully yields a number of contributions to the existing literature on both cities. One of the most successful aspects of Taunton's project involves unearthing new sets of images of London and Paris, ones that depart significantly from the iconic standards.

1 Katherine Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings: Architecture, Film and the City* (London: Routledge, 2000). See, also, aspects of Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotions: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York, NY: Verso, 2002), and Christine Geraghty 'Space, setting and mobility in Old New York', in *Now a Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

For example, Taunton presents us with the recurring image of Paris as walled city; in revisiting the effects of Haussmannization on the social fabric of the city, he abandons the boulevards and corresponding motif of circulation that have tended to dominate scholarship in this area to focus instead on the Haussmann *immeuble*, or the space of the home, which produces a certain class-based geography of the city. Taunton similarly leaves behind both Baudelaire and Balzac in order to explore the work of Émile Zola, and thus finds modes of Parisian streetwalking that have little to do with *flânerie*. As Taunton demonstrates with reference to Zola's *L'Assommoir*, Haussmannization was not simply about facilitating unhindered forms of mobility across the city but also about its underside, about the fixed nature of class relations that remained staunchly in place. Taunton traces this image of Paris as walled city to the present, where the *périphérique* highway performs a similar function in separating the *banlieues* from the centre of the city.

In the British context, Taunton's work departs from some of the more entrenched representations of London – as Dickensian city, for example – and evokes an image of nineteenth-century London as expanded city, where the development of the suburbs leads to an effect opposite to Haussmann's centralization of Paris. What is particularly enlightening about the first 'London chapter' of the book is the way in which Taunton shows us how the fictional work of Wells and Orwell participated in the discourses of urbanization circulating during this historical moment, including the planning ideas of the Garden City movement as well as its opposite, which advocated the building of high-density flats as a way of solving the housing crisis. Taunton juxtaposes the fiction of Wells and Orwell to illustrate a larger conflict between a vision of London as horizontal city, complete with its commuter suburbs, and London as vertical city, saturated with high rises.

A second contribution of *Fictions of the City* concerns Taunton's findings regarding the relationship between the centre and periphery as it developed historically within a British and French context. Taunton's comparative approach gives rise to this intriguing and little-known observation, where what is considered to be 'urban' in Paris is the centre of the city while what is desirably 'urban' in London is, in fact, the suburbs. If we flashforward to the present, in Paris the *banlieue* is the abode of the working class and of impoverished migrants, while London's poor reside within the heart of the city, which demonstrates the persistence of this particular set of relations between centre and periphery. Another value to Taunton's comparative approach is that it allows him to put unlikely texts in conversation, such as Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967), providing a new framework for discussing extensively studied material, although there are also missed opportunities for these moments, as there is something uncannily similar about the narrative trajectories of *L'Assommoir* and *Cathy Come Home*.

Although this book poses a number of significant interventions and insights with regard to established fields of study, there are times when

I take exception to the manner in which Taunton utilizes some of his case studies and, in particular, his chapter on Haussmann's Paris. In moving away from *flâneur*-centred studies, Taunton provides a critique of the 'modernity theorists', including Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel. There is something admirable in Taunton choosing to question the key figureheads of urban modernity but something problematic about the manner in which this critique is achieved. Taunton draws upon Georges Perec's 1978 novel, *Life: a User's Manual*, and some of Perec's other texts in order to argue that his analysis of the interior spaces of Haussmann's *immeuble* 'differs from Benjamin's and I would argue significantly improves upon it' (p. 27). It is rather difficult to sanction this type of argument, as it is not entirely sound methodologically to claim that Perec's contemporary fiction, one where he reimagines the spaces of the *immeuble*, 'improves' upon the work of social theorists who were living through these tumultuous changes.

In terms of film analysis Taunton brings together a diverse corpus of cinematic work, from Jean Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1936) to Roman Polanski's *The Tenant* (1976). While I appreciate the detailed and potentially rich motifs that Taunton uncovers within these films, including the significance of staircases, lifts and apartment noise, these insights occasionally seem to occur at the expense of viewing the films as entities in themselves, with their own generic, production and historical contexts. Beyond this, the book is somewhat less successful when dealing with films like Kassovitz's *La Haine* or Godard's *Deux ou trois choses*, primarily because there is already an extensive literature on both films and few new lessons can be gleaned from either text when thinking about mass housing in the Paris region.

Despite some of the shortcomings of Taunton's study, the value of this book for those researching cinematic or literary London and Paris rests with Taunton's historical analysis, relating narratives of urban planning and development that lead to the discovery of alternative motifs and images of two of the most iconic European cities. In moving away from *flânerie* to contemplate its underside in relation to the often static nature of social class, Taunton shows us that dwelling spaces can sometimes tell a very different story of the city than can be found on its streets.

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Robert Miklitsch, *Siren City: Sound and Source Music in Classic American Noir*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011, 288 pp.

JACOB SMITH

It is fitting that genre studies and sound studies should join forces, since both have at times been cast in the role of understudy in the larger field of film and television studies. That is, the study of genre is typically

I take exception to the manner in which Taunton utilizes some of his case studies and, in particular, his chapter on Haussmann's Paris. In moving away from *flâneur*-centred studies, Taunton provides a critique of the 'modernity theorists', including Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel. There is something admirable in Taunton choosing to question the key figureheads of urban modernity but something problematic about the manner in which this critique is achieved. Taunton draws upon Georges Perec's 1978 novel, *Life: a User's Manual*, and some of Perec's other texts in order to argue that his analysis of the interior spaces of Haussmann's *immeuble* 'differs from Benjamin's and I would argue significantly improves upon it' (p. 27). It is rather difficult to sanction this type of argument, as it is not entirely sound methodologically to claim that Perec's contemporary fiction, one where he reimagines the spaces of the *immeuble*, 'improves' upon the work of social theorists who were living through these tumultuous changes.

In terms of film analysis Taunton brings together a diverse corpus of cinematic work, from Jean Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1936) to Roman Polanski's *The Tenant* (1976). While I appreciate the detailed and potentially rich motifs that Taunton uncovers within these films, including the significance of staircases, lifts and apartment noise, these insights occasionally seem to occur at the expense of viewing the films as entities in themselves, with their own generic, production and historical contexts. Beyond this, the book is somewhat less successful when dealing with films like Kassovitz's *La Haine* or Godard's *Deux ou trois choses*, primarily because there is already an extensive literature on both films and few new lessons can be gleaned from either text when thinking about mass housing in the Paris region.

Despite some of the shortcomings of Taunton's study, the value of this book for those researching cinematic or literary London and Paris rests with Taunton's historical analysis, relating narratives of urban planning and development that lead to the discovery of alternative motifs and images of two of the most iconic European cities. In moving away from *flânerie* to contemplate its underside in relation to the often static nature of social class, Taunton shows us that dwelling spaces can sometimes tell a very different story of the city than can be found on its streets.

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understood to have emerged as an alternative to the prevailing tendency towards auteurist scholarship, while work on sound has often presented itself as an antidote to a 'visual bias' in the field. Both approaches also share an investment in broadening the scope of media analysis: genre studies by engaging with a nexus of media production and reception, and the intertextual dimension of film and television cultures; and sound studies by exploring the intermedial dimension of media cultures, as well as the ways in which sound articulates texts, bodies and spaces.

A number of recent monographs and edited collections have demonstrated how these two areas of inquiry can form a productive partnership. Robert Miklitsch's *Siren City: Sound and Source Music in Classic American Noir* joins a growing body of scholarly work that combines the study of film sound and film genre: monographs include Robert Spadoni's *Uncanny Bodies*, William Whittington's *Sound Design and Science Fiction*, Peter Stanfield's *Horse Opera*, and Sarah Kozloff's discussion of dialogue in Westerns, screwball comedies, gangster films and melodramas.¹ Also of note are two collections on sound and genre edited by Philip Hayward.² Miklitsch's book contributes to this scholarly discussion through a wide-ranging analysis of sound and music in the films noirs of the 1940s. Miklitsch has a knack for locating and explicating film sequences that demonstrate the importance of sound, although at times I found myself wishing for a more substantial historical and theoretical framework in order to provide ballast to his argument and unite the book's many intriguing case studies.

Miklitsch brackets his study within the clear historical demarcation of the 1940s, which allows him a certain freedom in choosing from both classic and lesser-known films. Miklitsch's focus on noir sound is particularly refreshing for a genre that has so often been defined in terms of visual techniques, and his basic assertion is that 'the sound track of film noir is frequently just as expressive as the genre's vaulted visual style' (p. xiii). One result of taking a sound-centred approach to noir is that Miklitsch finds surprising connections to the film musical: 'the continual recourse to song sequences' in 1940s films, he writes, suggests that film noir and the musical 'may not be as antithetical as they at first appear'; a point underlined by Dick Powell's career move from playing musical crooners to noir private dicks. In his book on early sound horror films, Spadoni also made a comparison with the musical, arguing that it was the closest relative of the horror film, since 'both genres seized on the abrupt tonal shifts that early sound filmmakers sometimes effected in their films unintentionally'.³ For both Miklitsch and Spadoni, sound practices serve as a productive point of articulation between ostensibly quite different genres.

Miklitsch's narrow focus on the noirs of the 1940s allows him to maintain a coherent project while also casting the net broadly in terms of the types of sound events that he examines. *Siren City* is thus remarkable in its ability to do justice to the multiplicity of sound culture: various

¹ Robert Spadoni, *Uncanny Bodies: the Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); William Whittington, *Sound Design and Science Fiction* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2007); Peter Stanfield, *Horse Opera: the Strange History of the 1930s Singing Cowboy* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000).

² Philip Hayward, *Off The Planet: Music, Sound and Science Fiction Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), and *Terror Tracks: Music, Sound and Horror Cinema* (London: Equinox Press, 2009).

³ Spadoni, *Uncanny Bodies*, p. 27.

- 4 On radio and noir, see Allison McCracken, 'Scary women and scarred men: *Suspense*, gender trouble, and postwar change, 1942–1950', in Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio (eds), *Radio Reader* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002); Matthew Solomon, 'Adapting "radio's perfect script": "sorry, wrong number" and *Sorry, Wrong Number*', in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 16, no. 1 (1997), pp. 23–40. On film and the record industry, see Jeff Smith, *The Sounds of Commerce* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998).

- 5 Whittington, *Sound Design and Science Fiction*, p. 7.

chapters address narration; characteristic sound effects of the genre; noir scenes that feature radios and phonograph records; and a range of onscreen musical performances. In one of the most compelling sections of the book, Miklitsch considers films such as *I Walk Alone* (Byron Haskin, 1948) and *Road House* (Jean Negulesco, 1948) that thematize the relationship between singers and nightclub owners; prompting a discussion of the labour of musical performance in the case of female singers who accompany themselves. The flexible definition of what counts as film sound allows Miklitsch to explore the intermedial quality of Hollywood films in the form of representations of audio technologies in film noir narratives. Examples include the dictaphone used by Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) in *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944); the role of radio and recorded sound in *The Unsuspected* (Michael Curtiz, 1947); and jukebox sequences in films such as *Fallen Angel* (Otto Preminger, 1945). While compelling, this material might have been bolstered by a more sustained engagement with the relevant sound industries and technologies. Miklitsch does include a short case study of RKO, and brief discussions of long-playing phonograph records and portable sound recording equipment, but more could have been done to flesh out how the representation of sound technologies in films noirs are indicative of broader media cultures.⁴ Whittington's book on sound and science fiction provides a useful point of comparison. Whittington is interested in the rise of both New Hollywood science fiction cinema and the emergence of the sound designer as an industrial category, and makes a compelling historical argument for why genre and sound were interconnected for a generation of filmmakers who were fascinated with both audio production and genre revision: he writes that 'science fiction and sound design converged in a symbiotic relationship to push cinematic technologies and techniques to their limits'.⁵ *Siren City* would have benefited from a more pronounced historical argument about film noir and its place in a larger sound culture.

Miklitsch, Whittington and Spadoni offer several different models for how studies of sound and genre might make use of case studies. Spadoni makes us look and listen to canonical texts – Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931) and James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) – in new ways. Whittington is sensitive to the influence of European art cinema on New Hollywood directors, but stays close to the sci-fi canon, with studies of *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), *2001: a Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), and *The Matrix* (The Wachowskis, 1999). If Miklitsch might have gained by Whittington's attention to historical context, Whittington might have gained by the breadth of Miklitsch's case studies. Indeed, *Siren City* provides close readings of a remarkable number of films, an approach that is laudable for the way in which it brings lesser-known texts to the scholarly discussion. When matched with his stated aim of keeping 'theoretical debates to a minimum', however, the over-reliance on plot summary and dizzying number of cases can eventually make the reader

feel a bit like Phillip Marlowe after being slugged with a blackjack: ‘a black pool opened up at my feet. I dived in. It had no bottom’ (p. xiv). The most sustained application of film theory in the book has to do with female musical performance in film noir, and Miklitsch offers a compelling reading of Rita Hayworth’s musical numbers in *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946) and *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1947), at one point stating that ‘the musical numbers in film noir are loci of audio-vision’ during which female characters can ‘be said to speak back – within the diegesis – to the fantasmatic image of them constructed by male characters’ (p. 248). These sections will make the book of interest to scholars interested in work on the female voice in the cinema along the lines of Amy Lawrence’s *Echo and Narcissus* and Britta Sjogren’s *Into the Vortex*.⁶

6 Amy Lawrence, *Echo and Narcissus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991); Britta Sjogren, *Into the Vortex* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

Siren City is a suggestive and readable book that, despite my few reservations, reflects a broad knowledge of the genre and a keen analytical eye and ear. When seen as part of a larger body of scholarly work it is also an indication of the knowledge to be gained by listening to genre. If the marriage of sound studies and genre studies provides a fruitful research method, it also begs questions about the merits of other possible methodological mashups. In terms of sound culture, what could be learned by a return to authorship and questions of creative work, perhaps with a new focus on the labour of sound designers or sound editors, or dynamics of collaboration in the design of the soundtrack? What about approaching sound from the perspective of the audience in order to discover unexpected generic clusters: do fans categorize films in terms of the particular composers or musical artists; how does science fiction imagery migrate to LP cover art? Or what about fusing sound studies and adaptation studies in order to examine film adaptations of radio shows and popular records; or popular songs that make reference to films and television shows? Can a combination of sound studies and performance studies develop the literature on generic dialogue or build on Kay Dickinson’s suggestive work on ‘pop stars who can’t act’?⁷ Stay tuned.

7 Kay Dickinson, *Off Key* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

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FINCINA HOPGOOD

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1 Luhrmann conceived the stage play *Strictly Ballroom* in 1984, in collaboration with fellow students at Sydney's National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA). It was extended and restaged in 1986, then revised in 1988 with a script cowritten by Luhrmann and Craig Pearce. Following its screening at Cannes, *Strictly Ballroom* was sold to eighty-six countries and eventually grossed an estimated \$70 million worldwide (Cook, p. 41).

2 See, for example, Hampton Stevens, 'Why everyone's worried about the new "Great Gatsby" movie', *The Atlantic*, 18 November 2010, <<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2010/11/why-everyones-worried-about-the-new-great-gatsby-movie/66737/>> accessed 29 April 2011. In his home town of Sydney, Luhrmann's plans for the film have been received more favourably as a boost to the local industry. See 'Baz Luhrmann's Great Gatsby 3D remake to be shot in Sydney', *The Australian*, 20 February 2011, <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/baz-luhrmanns-great-gatsby-3d-remake-to-be-shot-in-sydney/story-e6frg6nf-1226008896469>> accessed 29 April 2011.

3 Fincina Hopgood, 'Baz Luhrmann', in Ben Goldsmith and Geoff Lealand (eds), *Directory of World Cinema: Australia and New Zealand* (Bristol: Intellect, 2010), pp. 53–54. For more on post-auteurism, see Deb Verhoeven, *Jane Campion* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 23.

thorough investigation of the cinematic works of this iconoclastic director who began his career in theatre in Sydney in the 1980s. Luhrmann's 1992 screen adaptation of his play *Strictly Ballroom* caused a sensation at the Cannes Film Festival,¹ propelling him into the international market and a first-look deal with 20th Century-Fox. Since then, every Luhrmann film – *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996), *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), *Australia* (2008), even the short advertising film *No. 5 the Film* (2004) for Chanel No. 5 perfume – has been a media event, characterized by marketing hype, rumour and speculation. This level of anticipation both locally and globally (arguably unprecedented for the work of any other Australian director) is currently evident in the media coverage of Luhrmann's latest project, his adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*, which has already generated debates about casting and Luhrmann's proposal to film it in 3-D.² Cook investigates Luhrmann's relationship to the event movies of contemporary global cinema through her analysis of his films' popular reception, which she complements with a thorough coverage of reviews in film journals and academic readings of Luhrmann's work. But *Baz Luhrmann* – the first book-length study of this director – is more than a consolidation of the field; Cook brings to the project detailed insights into the production process from interviews with Luhrmann and his creative partner, designer Catherine Martin, and from her archival research at the AFI Research Collection in Melbourne and Luhrmann's private archives in Sydney. She provides impressive, close readings of each feature film supported by a variety of theoretical frameworks that are well chosen for such an eclectic filmmaker.

Skilfully drawing upon concepts such as travesty, hyperbole, melodrama and the neobaroque, Cook presents a sustained analysis of Luhrmann's 'Red Curtain Trilogy': *Strictly Ballroom*, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* and *Moulin Rouge!*. The term 'Red Curtain' is attributed to Luhrmann himself, who defines it in his DVD commentaries and press interviews as a theatricalized cinematic style that draws upon familiar stories and myths set in heightened created worlds and that demands audience participation through the storytelling devices of dance, Shakespearean prose or popular song. As I have suggested elsewhere, Luhrmann's creation of this term is symptomatic of the contemporary post-auteur's role in self-promotion and direct engagement with cinema scholarship.³ It is to Cook's credit that she does not merely reiterate the features of Red Curtain cinema through close analyses of each film; she takes Luhrmann's rhetoric as the point of departure for a deeper investigation of his films' engagement with questions of authorship, adaptation, authenticity and artifice. As Cook demonstrates, the thematic continuities between the three Red Curtain films – in which the authenticity of the emotions expressed by the lovers is juxtaposed with the artifice and superficiality of their environment – are reflected in Luhrmann and Martin's aesthetics, which similarly juggle authenticity and artifice by seeking to draw out

the emotional sincerity of the story while simultaneously celebrating the skill of their collaborators through an unapologetic display of the film's construction (see, for example, the rapid-fire editing of Jill Bilcock, who edited all three films, or the painterly, antirealist special effects showcased in *Moulin Rouge!*). This focus upon artifice and cinematic display has alienated some critics, but Cook grounds her analysis of Luhrmann's 'showiness' within considerations of not only postmodernist practice but also postcolonial artistic expression, which suggests the substance underlying the films' perceived superficiality.

Any concerns about the independence of Cook's study, given her privileged access to Luhrmann and Martin and their archives, are dispelled by the frankness with which she evaluates works such as the Chanel No. 5 commercial, in which Nicole Kidman plays 'the most famous woman in the world', temporarily escaping the pressures of fame through a romance with a bohemian writer played by Rodrigo Santoro:

The role of the perfume in the central character's bid for freedom and independence is obscure; indeed, it is possible to interpret the film, albeit against the grain of the director's intentions, as asserting the illusory nature of the ideals of beauty, truth, freedom and love celebrated by *Moulin Rouge!*. The idea that the writer's garret provides a peaceful haven is unconvincing, as is the notion that he is unaware of his lover's identity. (p. 114)

Cook's analysis of *No. 5 the Film* is helpful in appreciating the seemingly radical shift in Luhrmann's style between *Moulin Rouge!* and *Australia*. She suggests the Chanel film can be read as 'Luhrmann's acknowledgment that the Red Curtain style was now completely played out' (p. 114). In speculating on the thematic and stylistic links between this short film and *Australia*, Cook suggests that it is 'a transitional piece between the studio-bound Red Curtain aesthetic and the expansive exterior mode of the projected series of epics' (p. 115), which was intended to commence with Luhrmann's biopic of Alexander the Great (according to Cook, this was abandoned after the poor response to Oliver Stone's 2004 film *Alexander*).

There is a sense that Cook's enthusiasm for Luhrmann's work – evident in her convincing defence of his Red Curtain aesthetic – wanes when she comes to analyze *Australia*, which she describes as 'a heady brew' of Hollywood genres, various Australian film cycles and multiple storytelling devices (p. 131). A flawed film, *Australia* has nonetheless gone on to become Australia's highest grossing film after *Crocodile Dundee* (Peter Faiman, 1986),⁴ and there is significance in its engagement with debates about contemporary Australia's fraught relationship with its colonial past, in the wake of the landmark 1992 High Court case concerning native title, *Mabo v Queensland (No. 2)*, and the publication in 1997 of *Bringing Them Home*, the Human

⁴ 'Australia beats *Babe* box office', *Urban Cinefile*, 26 February 2009, <http://www.urbancinefile.com.au/home/view.asp?a=15443&s=News_Files_Archives> accessed 29 April 2011.

5 For more on the impact of these events upon Australian cinema in the 1990s and 2000s, see Felicity Collins and Therese Davis, *Australian Cinema After Mabo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

6 See the debate between Professor Marcia Langton and Germaine Greer published in *The Age* and *The Guardian* newspapers in November and December 2008 (Cook, pp. 142–43).

Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's report on the Stolen Generations.⁵ Cook's sensitive reading of *Australia* within this wider sociohistorical context redeems the film as an object worthy of study despite – or indeed because of – its structural and tonal inconsistencies and its controversial reimagining of Australian history.⁶

In her detailed analyses of Luhrmann's four features, Cook segues with ease from behind-the-scenes anecdotes to surveys of the films' popular reception and more sophisticated theoretical discussion. This juxtaposition of source material produces a rich and thorough consideration of each work and is held together by Cook's elegant prose that does not sacrifice clarity for complexity of ideas. As with other books in the BFI's World Directors series, *Baz Luhrmann* is illustrated with several frame stills (most in black and white, some in full colour) accompanied by pertinent descriptions relating the image to Cook's text. The inclusion of Martin's costume sketches for *Australia* is helpful in illuminating the discussion of each character's 'costume plot' (p. 126). Cook provides a thorough bibliography and comprehensive listing of all Luhrmann's works, including his opera and theatre productions, soundtracks and music videos, which highlight the multimedia aesthetic that drives his creativity.

In her final chapter, 'DVD, the internet and nostalgia', Cook considers Luhrmann's body of work alongside recent technological changes that have fundamentally altered the 'classical' mode of viewing film in a public cinema. With the advent of DVD, home cinema systems and now online exhibition, Luhrmann has embraced the ways in which these new technologies have expanded filmmakers' interactions with their audience, for example, the detailed commentaries and extensive bonus features on the four-disc box set *Baz Luhrmann's Red Curtain Trilogy* (2002) and the *Set to Screen* podcasts (2008), produced in conjunction with Apple, about the making of *Australia*. Cook adopts Svetlana Boym's concept of 'reflective nostalgia' to describe how the DVD featurette showcasing the House of Iona – Luhrmann and Martin's combined house and production base in Sydney – represents 'home' in both national and personal terms (pp. 150–51). This is one of the few times that Cook's deployment of theory obscures rather than clarifies her analysis. She is on stronger ground when she observes that revisiting Luhrmann's films on DVD activates a nostalgic experience for the viewer, and indeed for Luhrmann and his collaborators who – in the case of *Strictly Ballroom* and *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* – recorded their commentaries years after the films' production and initial reception. The DVD releases (and rereleases) of Luhrmann's films not only expand their profit share and prolong their circulation long after theatrical exhibition; through the post-auteurist discourse of commentaries and bonus features they provide Luhrmann with the opportunity to assert the national identity of his films – despite their US studio funding – as defiantly Australian.

The evolution of Luhrmann's career reveals much about the changing terms of engagement with international audiences for the Australian film

industry since *Strictly Ballroom*'s debut at Cannes. The festival has long been a showcase for new Australian talent, but Australian filmmakers are increasingly looking beyond the niche market of the film festival circuit to conceive new ways to position their films globally. Seizing the opportunity provided by the establishment of Fox Studios in 1998, Luhrmann has succeeded in establishing a production base in Sydney rather than relocating to Hollywood, while continuing to maintain a high profile internationally through relentless promotional tours and ancillary marketing strategies. Cook identifies this as 'the transnational utopianism at the heart of Baz Luhrmann's films, which strive to be both local and global, and to reach popular international audiences' (p. 9). As her book ably demonstrates, Luhrmann is an exemplary transnational filmmaker.

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Máire Messenger Davies, *Children, Media and Culture*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2010, 236 pp.

Jeanette Steemers, *Creating Preschool Television: a Story of Commerce, Creativity and Curriculum*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, 252 pp.

LYNN WHITAKER

Since the 2005 special issue of *Screen* devoted to 'The Child in Film and Television',¹ there has been considerable growth in the international field of children's television and media research. 2010 saw the publication of key individual contributions from two leading UK-based academics in the field, Máire Messenger Davies and Jeanette Steemers. Davies is known for her passionate advocacy of high-quality children's media while Steemers is perhaps more ambivalent in her research into its contemporary production contexts. Each of their respective 2010 books represents a welcome and useful addition to the author's *oeuvre* and to the field more generally: Messenger Davies's is a comprehensive text book useful to students and researchers interested in any aspect of childhood studies and their nexus with children's media; Steemers's is a scholarly monograph presenting extensive original research into the production ecology of preschool television.

Produced as part of the redoubtable 'Issues in Cultural and Media Studies' series (edited by Stuart Allan), Messenger Davies's *Children, Media and Culture* presents a detailed overview of the issues and research in this field. Like others in this large series, it functions as an invaluable one-stop shop for both the generalist or casual academic reader, whilst the breadth of the content and of Messenger Davies's interlinked thematic approach ensure that there are fresh ideas and connections for the specialist too. The book offers not only a useful recap of Messenger Davies's own extensive research relating to the children's audience, but

¹ *Screen*, vol. 46, no 3 (2005), ed. Karen Lury.

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creates links and threads across the fields of literature, history of art, childhood studies, gaming, marketing, and more, in what is partly a comprehensive and detailed literature review. The author offers hints throughout as to the book's origins and applications in teaching around 'the culture of childhood', and I would certainly recommend its use as a comprehensive core text for honours level or postgraduate study relating to children's media culture, or for the media academic who seeks a good introduction to this specialist area.

That the book brings the reader up to date with new media developments in children's popular culture suggests that Messenger Davies's own research continues apace. She separates out media forms and platforms as individual subjects of study, but the conception of the children's audience used throughout the text is consistent with a convergence media model in which the word *audience* frequently proves inadequate to describe children's relationship to media. Essentially this is a holistic and child-centred construction of the child as media-user and citizen, which is consistent with Messenger Davies's positive belief in the power of media to 'provide means for even disadvantaged children to seize moments of empowerment, enlightenment and joy from the most unpromising environments' (p. 193). Messenger Davies's construction supports the notion of the child as an autonomous *being* rather than a *becoming*.

The book is divided into two equal parts – 'The Study of Childhood' and 'Children in Media, Children's Media' – each with five substantive chapters complete with chapter-specific references and supporting thematic materials. This tight structure, along with bibliographies, suggested viewing and glossary, helps to marshal a large volume of information into an accessible format; it also means that one can use the book purely as a reference text, or read through in the manner of a cumulative and compelling narrative. Certainly there is much to stimulate; and, while best known for her work on children's *television*, Messenger Davies's redefinition of 'media' is a key strength of the book. As the cover blurb by Dafna Lemish states, '*Children, Media and Culture* seeks to redefine the discipline's domain by including classical art, fairy tales, and literature in the research purview along with media such as television, gaming and social networking'. It is this all-round reach from the author's specialism that makes this text an impressive achievement, particularly as the treatment is even and engaging throughout. Always incisive, the tone remains lively and accessible and the use of concrete examples from a wide range of sources, such as production studies, textual analysis and personal reflection, allows for fresh insight into theoretical perspectives. In her apposite case studies and examples the author rarely uses obvious or well-worn illustrations and instead presents material that clearly excites her own interest; her new media case studies, including SMS poetry, are especially novel.

Where I found the text most thought-provoking, even moving, is where the authorial voice and stance is at its most explicit in campaigning for the rights of the child, for example in her exhortations

to the viewer of images of children to remember that ‘there always *is* a real child with a real life behind this image ... this person should not be forgotten. This person has agency, and should have some control over the use of his or her representation’ (p. 98). Messenger Davies reminds us that issues around the adult investment in childhood and its representation arise as much in *scholarship* of children’s media as they do in the more obviously problematized areas of popular culture. I am currently employed in researching the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and I am struck by how attention to rights is embedded within Messenger Davies’s research practice, particularly in relation to her audience research conducted directly with children, which she describes as ‘fun’ for researcher and participant alike. The vulnerable status of children means that a protectionist discourse often foregrounds much that is wrong in our treatment of them and in the media produced for them. Messenger Davies, while acknowledging these issues, stresses instead what she believes to be the transformative and uplifting power of dedicated children’s media, and argues that the ‘adult work of providing such moments [of joy] for children is one of the most important projects of any society that claims to call itself cultured’ (p. 193).

Jeanette Steemers’s *Creating Preschool Television: a Story of Commerce, Creativity and Curriculum* is an ambitious project that makes as significant a contribution to television production studies as it does to children’s media research. Drawing on over a hundred interviews with production professionals in the preschool television sector, and supported by observation in sixteen production environments, Steemers’s aim is to ‘examine the range of forces that shape the development and production of contemporary preschool television by examining how those involved in its creation and distribution negotiate the wider commercial, creative and cultural forces that impact on production’ (p. 3). This is a complex task, made possible by the now accepted regulatory and economic taxonomy of preschool as a defined genre and by the self-proclaimed specialized nature of the industry; the latter acting, as John T. Caldwell might recognize, as the shared ‘industrial reflexivity’ that is employed by professionals within the preschool television community.² As such, Steemers’s work can be seen to build on the predominantly US-production research of J. Alison Bryant into that ‘community’,³ but with the important distinction that the focus is purely *preschool* production and that both UK and US production are considered. Indeed the nuanced relationship between UK and US production is a key aspect of Steemers’s convincing argument about the now global nature of the preschool television production ecology.

Supported by AHRC funding, Steemers makes no apology for her bias towards UK production examples and illustrations, and there is perhaps some overlap here with Messenger Davies’s political aim in valorizing the UK children’s television production community (though not at the expense

² John Thornton Caldwell, *Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

³ J. Alison Bryant (ed.), *The Children’s Television Community*. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007).

of US preschool production, which Steemers and Davies both favourably critique in their chosen examples). Although the large budgets quoted in the research would appear to refute any notion of crisis in preschool production, Steemers makes effective use of the Ofcom 2007 Report on the Future of Children's Television as a springboard for a qualitative approach to analysis that outlines some perhaps worrying trends in an industry competing within a global marketplace dominated by US content and commercial broadcasting values. In this, Steemers's attribution of the geographical base of her industry participants helps to build a fascinating contrast between national attitudes to production. The reader is left largely to draw their own inference from these contributions yet is subtly encouraged to reach some unexpected conclusions, such is Steemers's wit and skill in juxtaposing and positioning statements within a narrative that remains respectful of its research participants. For example, a quote from a US producer that 'I can give you examples of shows out of the UK where you have characters with large needles chasing characters with balloons and everybody is laughing except the US broadcaster' (p. 53) is followed with examples of UK producers' frustration at risk-averse and bland content in which 'they try to round up all the edges of a spiky story towards a nice soft bouncy ball' (p. 53). Steemers herself treads a careful line, and by allowing readers to make up their own minds this text should be appreciated in both the USA and the UK.

Steemers's approach also merits especial mention in her incorporation of textual analysis into her production study, in a chapter coauthored with James Walters. While possibly the least integrated of the chapters (perhaps indicative of the relatively new status of textual analysis within production studies), Steemers and Walters argue that there is much more to be made of textual analysis – particularly of mundane or everyday texts – in production studies. Their aim in incorporating textual analysis, therefore, is the direct acknowledgement and redress of the low cultural status given to preschool television (in which they argue it is widely assumed that aesthetic concerns are always subservient to narrative ones). Although greater justification could be provided for their choice of analyzed texts, the chapter provides ample evidence of the 'textured' nature of preschool aesthetics in which 'even at the level of description, it becomes clear that a dense range of audio-visual layers and transitions are at work ... indicating an accomplished degree of technical endeavour and creative ambition' (p. 205). Steemers and Walters argue convincingly that it is this rich aesthetic that rewards analysis and enhances the meaningful scope of production enquiry. Given the industry contributors' focus on specific details of content, this chapter acts as a logical conclusion to the scope and structure of this detailed production study. I would anticipate that Steemers's project, taken as a whole, will prove to be an important work in television production studies, shaping future research models of scholars of different disciplines and genres.

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WILL DODSON

One of David Lynch's best-known statements comes from an interview with Chris Rodley, in which he remarks:

My childhood was elegant homes ... green grass, cherry trees. Middle America as it's supposed to be. But on the cherry tree there's this pitch oozing out – some black, some yellow, and millions of red ants crawling all over it. I discovered that if one looks a little closer at this beautiful world, there are always red ants underneath.¹

¹ Chris Rodley (ed.), *Lynch on Lynch*, rev. edn (London: Faber and Faber, 2005).

In the sense of 'looking closer', Lynch has always been straightforward in defining his artistic project. He magnifies images to reveal secrets hidden inside, underneath, behind and within. He also amplifies sound. His sound motifs, after all, signal 'red ants' as much as his images: the vortex in *Eraserhead* (1977), the screaming elephants in *Elephant Man* (1980), the literal ants buzzing in *Blue Velvet* (1986), the crackling flame in *Wild at Heart* (1990), the wind through the firs in *Twin Peaks* (1990–91), the needle in the record groove in *Inland Empire* (2006). This needle image is particularly mysterious, for it scratches the record, suggesting that there is something hidden under the surface of both the image and the sound.

Though Lynch's films reveal the presence of secrets, they tend to leave the nature and implications of those secrets frustratingly out of reach. Furthermore, Lynch himself, though candid in his simple refusal to discuss in detail his artistic intentions, nevertheless *seems* obfuscatory in interviews. Perhaps paradoxically, direct simplicity is part of the Lynchian mystery; simple images, simple sounds, once magnified and amplified, reveal the chaos of red ants. After all, says Michel Chion, 'it is because he says simple things with simple words that people find him vague' (p. 186). Chion's remark appears in the excellent *David Lynch in Theory*, edited by Francois-Xavier Gleyzon.

This collection of twelve essays, which concludes with the 2009 interview by Chion, explores many of the mysteries and secrets of Lynch's films and interviews, and adds its own Lynchian complications both to its subject and itself. The individual essays' thematic approaches variously combat, contradict and complement one another. Contributors advance psychoanalytic, Deleuzian and, most interestingly, neurological perspectives that challenge readers to reconsider Lynch from all these directions simultaneously. It is a rewarding challenge, and Gleyzon's book makes significant contributions to Lynch studies as well as to film theory's critical terrain.

The book proper begins with a Lacanian reading of *Inland Empire* by Todd McGowan. McGowan's earlier study, *The Impossible David Lynch*,² developed a psychoanalytic framework that he continues here, positing that *Inland Empire*'s fantasy offers opportunities for real,

² Todd McGowan, *The Impossible David Lynch* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007).

material productivity. In part, the very artificiality of the film and its various 'narrative' threads offer an 'opening' through which it can have material effect; but what kind of material effect? Readers are left to ponder this rather provocative idea, and the essay is even more interesting when read alongside Scott Wilson's 'Neur4cinema', which applies neurological principles to the experience of watching Lynch's films. Wilson foregrounds Lynch's use of sound as an organizing principle, citing neurological studies by Antonio Damasio and others to argue that the associative nature of memory – the linkages of sounds and images in a process combining the ethical, emotional and rational aspects of (un)consciousness – offers a useful way of considering Lynch's 'dream' worlds. The external world, Wilson notes, conditions our neurological structures and our 'self-modification' of our minds. When read in conjunction with McGowan, we might develop a better idea of how fantasy has productive *material* effect in terms of our own neurological self-fashioning. Wilson's essay is to me the most exciting of the collection, and offers a wealth of applications to cinema studies in general.

Other essays complicate one another. Greg Hainge, for example, offers an interesting contradiction to McGowan, taking him to task for refusing 'to let Lynch's films not make sense' (p. 25). Hainge rejects psychoanalytic readings and instead focuses on ways in which the films specifically resist narrative closure. He links Lynch back to the cinema of attractions, in which the spectacle is far more important than the secondary or even dispensable narrative. Whether or not readers accept a psychoanalytic 'narrative' as a valid approach to Lynch, this link to early avant-garde cinemas of attractions makes a great deal of sense, particularly when one considers the various ways in which Lynch frames his subjects in his painting, sculpture and photography.

The off-kilter, spectacular quality of Lynch's photography is particularly important to his film style. Both Louis Armand's and Gleyzon's essays make comparative studies of Lynch's photography with other artists. Armand brings Lynch into conversation with Marc Atkins, and Gleyzon with Francis Bacon by way of Bataille. Each posits interesting ways of seeing Lynch's work – Armand as suggesting emptiness of content and Gleyzon as experimenting in formlessness. These connections, along with Eric G. Wilson's exploration of Lynch's early shorts and his practice of Transcendental Meditation, are particularly interesting when read in conjunction with Joshua D. Gonsalves's "'I'm a whore": "on the other side" of *Inland Empire*'. Gonsalves criticizes Lynch as an *idiot savant* – as clueless, he says, as Quentin Tarantino³ – and accuses *Inland Empire* of race blindness and misogyny. Readers may agree or not with Gonsalves's argument, but either way it is important that he locates Lynch in a larger *political* milieu, and that the other contributors locate him in a larger *artistic* milieu. All allow us to think of Lynch's work in sociopolitical contexts, conditioned by and in conversation with, rather than isolated from, the real world.

3 I must digress and take issue with Gonsalves about the comparison to Tarantino. He writes, 'Lynch, like Tarantino, seems to have no idea what he is talking about when he talks about his films' (p. 118). Lynch, however, clearly refuses to speculate on, or share his ideas about, his films' meanings. Tarantino has no such self-imposed limitation, and speaks at length, in fact ad nauseam. The comparison here seems to be apples and oranges.

Finally there is the valuable new interview with Chion, in which he considers questions of Lynch from a post-auteur point of view. His view on Lynch – which may be extended to general considerations of auteurship – involves applying auteur theory ‘intelligently and not mechanically’; considering biography only in terms of locating Lynch, not explaining him; and recognizing the importance of collaboration – multiple auteurs – while the director remains a primary shaping force (p. 186). The interview is a fine capstone to the essays, and helps link them as a *collection* rather than a comprehensive study, something which, perhaps especially in the case of Lynch, seems impossible.

Much of the book focuses on Lynch’s latest film, or, to be accurate, digital video, *Inland Empire* (2006). Three essays engage with *Inland Empire* primarily, and the sequence of the essays overall ensures that the film inhabits each of them. This, I think, is one of the book’s strengths, because *Inland Empire*’s hypertextual links to all of Lynch’s other films locate it as a central point from which to consider his work in various media. On the other hand, *Inland Empire*’s pervasiveness reveals significant absences from the book. In particular I wish more attention had been paid to Lynch’s multimedia experiments that clearly connect to his techniques in *Inland Empire*, such as the web-based Interview Project, a collaborative endeavour with his son Austin Lynch. Thematically it seems there might be useful connections to McGowan’s thesis about *Inland Empire*’s fantasy and materiality. Here the idea of fantasy having, as McGowan puts it, ‘the capacity to create real change’ (p. 9) might offer us an interesting perspective from which to consider our individual histories, the ways in which we narrate our identities. These interviews, in the sense that they are spontaneously constructed narratives, are fantasies of interpretation.

Readers will necessarily also be reminded of other Lynch projects that are not included here. Alanna Thain’s contribution discusses *Rabbits*, the 2002 online ‘sitcom’ about rabbit-headed beings that also appear in *Inland Empire*, but only in terms of its relevance to *Empire*. This is her intent, of course, and her essay, about movement in that film through a term she calls ‘vibration images’, is an interesting discussion of Lynch’s inextricable yet often incongruent sound images. Nevertheless, Thain’s mention of the original ten episodes of *Rabbits* on *davidlynch.com* made me want to read more about them and how they evolved into a component of *Inland Empire*. Moreover, the book as a whole ignores much of what Lynch has done between the theatrical releases of *Mulholland Drive* (2001) and *Inland Empire*, despite the many short films, animation and musical projects he has produced over the past decade. I would contend that one should no longer consider any of Lynch’s projects as separate texts but rather as strands of an ever-widening web. The interesting and at times exciting theoretical explorations of Lynch’s films made me wish for an expanded edition that covers more of Lynch’s other work. After all, the book is titled *David Lynch in Theory*, not *David Lynch’s Films in Theory*.

Indeed, because Gleyzon's introduction makes so much of Lynch's physical tools and workshop, readers may be surprised to find relatively little attention paid to his painting and sculpture, or to the technical choices in his films. The first sentence of the book reads: 'In David Lynch's workshop, pell-mell, are to be found a variety of implements: hammers, paintbrushes, brushes, cameras, old radios, frames, canvases, photographic film, a soldering iron, drills, etc.' (p. 1). The reader may understandably expect some theoretical consideration of not just what Lynch produces with the tools, but why he chooses these particular tools and, in addition, more analysis of his artistic endeavours beyond film. Armand and Gleyzon explore some of his photographic work in their essays (*Nudes and Smoke* and *The Air is on Fire*, respectively), but one might wish for more. Especially because the book focuses on *Inland Empire*, I also looked for more analysis of Lynch's decision to shoot it with a consumer-grade digital camera, not to mention analysis of his complete shift away from film to digital and web media. Instead the essays in the book work from psychoanalysis, Deleuze, Chion's 'Lynch Kit', and other sets of critical terms. These are not Lynch's tools, these are theorists' tools. Obviously this is a film theory book – by definition an application of theorists' tools – but after reading Gleyzon's introduction I wished that the theory in this text had included more consideration of the artist's tools.

More than any other Lynch project, *Inland Empire* calls attention to the tools with which it is constructed, and to itself as a cheaply produced digital film. As Lynch has stated on a number of occasions, the quality is not just 'less good' than film, it is different, and causes spectators to see things differently. The images contain secrets even more formless than those of his previous works. The needle scratches at the record, and the sounds rumble over, under, and around the flattened images that bleed red (ants?) and yellow. *Inland Empire* may be, for many, the most difficult Lynch film to watch, but it rewards viewers with fascinating connections to all of his other work, in all media. Thus *David Lynch in Theory*'s emphasis on *Inland Empire* in conversation with his earlier film work makes the book as a whole tremendously exciting for Lynch studies.

I therefore do not intend my lamentation over what is absent to imply criticism of *David Lynch in Theory*; on the contrary, this book offers valuable and new ways of thinking about Lynch's work more broadly. These essays challenge and complicate views of Lynch in playful, provocative and occasionally profound terms. They offer new critical webs, not frameworks, with which to link and explore not only the work discussed but also the work left out. Thus we can consider psychoanalytic narratives and non-narrative cinemas of attraction as contradictory without being mutually exclusive. We can thread together and unravel various perspectives at various moments and see Lynch's work anew each time.

Lynch's latest project took the form of a live streaming concert of Duran Duran for VEVO and YouTube on 23 March 2011. It offered an unprecedented level of audience participation – so much so that it may no longer be accurate to refer to them as audience or spectators, but rather

contributing editors and production designers. Participants had the ability to select camera angles, thereby assembling individual image streams. They could also upload images to project onto the backdrop behind the band. These interactions suggest new roles for Lynch – as well as other filmmakers, well known and otherwise – in post-auteur theory, roles as yet undefined. This book may help subsequent critics consider these roles and further explore Lynch's tools and multiple media. Ultimately, *David Lynch in Theory* does what all worthy books should do: it rewards repeated readings with layers of provocative ideas, and intrigues readers about possibilities still unexplored.

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Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and Other Media Paratexts*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2010, 247 pp.

KEITH M. JOHNSTON

Jonathan Gray calls, in this book, for an 'off-screen studies', a discipline (or addition to existing disciplines) that can offer serious academic study of a range of promotional, industrial and audience-based materials. Gray subsumes these materials into the single category (borrowed from Gerard Genette) of 'paratext'.¹ He suggests several times that such a call is innovative (while building on particular books and articles), and that this lack of attention to trailers, posters, websites and action figures is severely limiting academic ability to understand the larger narrative universes being constructed in film, television and other media. However, as demonstrated by Stephen Heath's 1976 statement – 'A film must never end ... it must exist ... [even] before we enter the cinema ... a film is a constant doing over again'² – similar calls for more attention to be given to these various texts are not as infrequent as this book might suggest.³ There is a danger that, despite useful and potent case studies, the book actually fails to engage with the rich and varied work on promotional materials and fan behaviour already taking place within reception and audience studies.

Gray is interested in the interplay of production, distribution, promotion and reception and, like Jason Mittell before him, in examining 'the ways in which various forms of communication work to constitute ... meanings'.⁴ Unlike reception studies, however, Gray's impetus is (as suggested by his use of Genette) to explore the range of narrative meanings that forms such as trailers and merchandising can add to these fictional universes. This arguably limits the scope of the book because, even though it decentres the place of the film or television show, it cannot allow these paratexts ever to break away fully from the larger 'storyworld' of the parent text. Again mirroring Mittell, Gray's work is strongest when it demonstrates how a text must be studied in association with the network of other materials that surround it rather than isolated

¹ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: the Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

² Stephen Heath, 'Screen images, film memory', *Edinburgh Magazine*, no. 1 (1976), pp. 33–42.

³ See, for example, the work of Barbara Klinger, Janet Staiger, Ernest Mathijs, Lisa Kernan, Vinzenz Hediger, Keith M Johnston, Thomas Austin, Mary Beth Haralovich, Mark Millar and Jason Mittell.

⁴ Jason Mittell, 'A cultural approach to television genre theory', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2001), p. 8.

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⁴ Jason Mittell, 'A cultural approach to television genre theory', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 40, no. 3 (2001), p. 8.

5 Barbara Klinger, 'Digressions at the cinema', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1989), p. 5.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

7 Janet Staiger, 'Announcing wares, winning patrons, voicing ideals: thinking about the history and theory of film advertising', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 29, no. 3 (1990), p. 22.

8 Klinger, 'Digressions at the cinema', p. 9.

9 Ernest Mathijs, 'Bad reputations: the reception of "trash" cinema', *Screen*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2005), p. 452.

as the sole source of meaning. Yet this is hardly a revelatory moment within studies of film, television or other media.

Over twenty years ago Barbara Klinger noted how Heath had used the term 'epiphenomena' to refer to 'exhibition material such as posters, ads and trailers, as well as an extensive array of intermedia coverage which features pieces on stars, directors and the making of films ... the marketing of products such as toys and tee shirts'.⁵ Heath used the term to demonstrate that a film existed in audience's minds before they saw it; Gray claims that paratexts on the 'outskirts' of a television show 'had fashioned a text' before audiences viewed it (p. 62). Klinger expanded Heath's original concept, arguing that all these different materials create a 'consumable identity' around a film, background information that influences the process of viewing and creation of meaning. For Klinger this is an essential part of film's industrial nature, but not (as with Gray) to link back to the larger fictional universe of the film or television text, but to argue that most promotional campaigns are not 'primarily interested with producing coherent interpretations of a film ... the goal of promotion is to produce multiple avenues of access to the text ... in order to maximise its audience'.⁶

This highlights a major distinction between Gray's work and reception studies more generally. The latter features a focus on how film advertising and promotion contains disparate meanings fed in at the industrial level, and the meanings that can be received by different audiences when viewing such epiphenomena: 'no monological correlation occurred between text, ideology, social formation and the subject who was addressed' by studies in reception studies around film advertising.⁷ This approach has only increased in prominence since the early 1990s, with fan and reception studies revealing different audience perspectives on texts. As Klinger has noted, the advent of new technology 'has provided new forums for advertising, substantially advancing the social range of promotion'⁸: something that the growth of the internet has fostered still further.

This emphasis on Klinger is not to set up an artificial comparison between her and Gray, but rather to point out that the field of reception studies, as it has developed around this and other work, needs to be acknowledged in a book that covers similar ground. Gray's lack of engagement with reception studies (either in terms of methodology, existing work, or theory) presents a significant absence. There are central ideas, such as Ernest Mathijs's notion of a 'reception trajectory' (that takes into account the different stages of production, distribution and reception that media texts go through to create and revise their public identities) that would have offered useful correlation with Gray's examples.⁹ To take one specific example from my own field, Chapter 2 is concerned with a discussion of how 'trailers and previews may dictate how to read a text' (p. 51) and that, like other promotional materials, they 'tell us how producers or distributors would prefer for us to interpret a

text, which audience demographics they feel they are addressing, and how they want us to make sense of their character and plots' (p. 72).

From this, Gray (following Lisa Kernan) wants to understand 'why' (or how) a trailer might work or not work. Yet his answer simply returns to the old adage that trailers lie, or misrepresent, the finished film. His example of the *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan, 1997) trailers shows up one of the limitations of the 'paratext' concept, and its need to be associated with the parent text of the feature film: Gray reads the trailers as being successful or unsuccessful in terms of how well they represent the finished feature film (either generically, or in relation to characters and plot development). This is temporally disingenuous, because audiences cannot know the finished narrative when they watch the trailer. Mirroring previous trailer studies,¹⁰ the emphasis remains on how accurate a 'free sample' the trailer offers of the finished film rather than focusing on the different narratives the trailer (or other promotional materials) might engage with to create 'multiple avenues of access'.¹¹ Trailers (and promos) may predetermine a film or television show's fate at birth (or pre-birth), as Gray suggests, but suggesting that they are only useful if they offer an effective summary of the final product reduces the ways in which analysts can approach and understand advertising materials, and ignores audience experience of trailer viewing (proper ethnographic studies of trailer audiences are a current gap in this field).

Because of its roots in literature theory, the idea of the paratext reduces many of the fascinating materials studied here (trailers, websites, fan forums, DVD extras) to a relationship with narrative: an emphasis on what they offer to the expanded universe or storyworld of *Lord of the Rings*, *Batman* or *Star Wars*. The multiple pleasures and perspectives suggested by reception studies are restricted to narrative terms. Rather than be seen as individual short films containing their own narratives, trailers are explicitly judged as being accurate or inaccurate representations of the final film. This loses any sense of the trailer as a repository of industrial, ideological or historical material around issues of genre, stardom or technology.¹² Gray never states that there is only one narrative that all paratexts follow, particularly when audience behaviour is brought into play (there is a particularly useful section on *Star Wars* action figures that suggests the possibility of open-ended play narratives that create multiple and individual story universes), but if one of these paratexts does not contribute to the larger narrative it is rejected as being unincorporated, unsuccessful, not 'adding anything to the text or its narrative, storyworld, characters or style' (p. 210).

That quotation comes from an example of a Domino's Pizza tie-in with *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008), of which Gray challenges the use-value precisely because it does not develop the narrative. However, from the perspective of Klinger's or Mathijs's work, that commercial relationship would be seen as an important part of the 'consumable identity' of that film, one of the 'multiple avenues of access' viewers might have, and one part of the larger 'reception trajectory' that

10 Mary Beth Haralovich and Cathy Root Klaprat, 'Marked Woman and Jezebel: the spectator in the trailer', *Enclitic*, Fall 1981/Spring 1982, pp. 66–74; Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: Reading American Film Trailers* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004).

11 Klinger, 'Digressions at the cinema', p. 9.

12 Keith M. Johnston, *Coming Soon: Film Trailers and the Selling of Hollywood Technology* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009).

can be traced for film and television shows from production and distribution to the various sites of reception for modern media products. When Gray calls for an 'off-screen studies', he is actually calling for the study of paratextual production: yet by limiting what counts as a paratext he is contradicting the need for 'off-screen studies' in the first place. Domino's Pizza's tie-in with *The Dark Knight* is an integral part of that film's reception, offering images and clips from the film and helping to build public awareness of memorable sequences and moments from the latest addition to the *Batman* franchise. Rejecting some texts in favour of others, and suggesting that there is a right and a wrong way to produce and study paratexts, is as limiting as ignoring these texts in the first place.

So where does this leave Gray's concept of 'off-screen' studies? Like other borrowings from literature theory, the idea of the 'paratext' is unconvincing when applied to a wider range of audiovisual media and, ultimately, attempts to cover too broad a church to be useful (this is also an issue with terms such as 'inter-text,' 'extra-text' or epiphenomena): can one term really encompass anything from subway advertising to a *New York Times* review, an introductory talk at a film festival to a DVD special feature? It remains unclear what film or television studies gains from adopting such a term, and it offers nothing to the specific analysis of individual texts such as trailers, action figures, websites, fan fiction, posters or critical reviews. Methodologically it is also problematic. Gray relies mostly on textual analysis, with a scattering of reception studies, audience work and narrative theory; yet there is no clear distinction about how this mix could help scholars or students study paratexts in the future.

However, where Gray's work is essential is in his central call for these other materials (whether promotional or fan-produced) to no longer be seen as peripheral, invisible within film and media studies. His call for their inclusion in wider debates may echo other past (and more recent) work, but it remains an important intervention. While the term 'off-screen studies' might be a misnomer (almost all of the materials listed are on some form of screen, whether cinema, television, computer or mobile phone), it should be heralded. But the terms in which 'off-screen studies' should be shaped needs more thought. Here the emphasis remains on close analysis of different elements (with some audience research in places), but is that the most relevant methodological approach to apply to, among other materials, websites, merchandise and forum posts? Approaches from within reception studies, as promoted by Klinger, Staiger, Mathijs et al., may not have firmer answers than Gray but they offer stronger frameworks within which to conduct the analysis of such a disparate range of materials.

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Notes to Contributors

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1. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (London: Macmillan, 1982).
2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'Melodramatic realism: on some French women's films in the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.
3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietrapaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

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